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NEW SEASON: SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

The Sydney Theatre Company kicked off 1982 with two masterpieces — a rights version of *Chicago* at the Theatre Royal and Hart and Harrison's *Four Casts* at the Old Tote to be directed by George Ogilvie, starring Peter Handberg and Carol Kane. For this Adelaide Festival production David Hare will be commissioning to direct his new play *I, Map of the World* in which that excellent young actor Robert French will appear with Marsha Smith. Richard Williams then directs Shaffer's smash hit *Amadeus* to star John Gaden as Salieri and now Macbeth with John Bell and Robert Swain as the infamous couple. Richard Fisher will direct David Williams' semi-famous *The Performance* and the National play *I, Map of the World* and John Gaden as John Gifford. The season closes with Pirandello's *A Few Dollars' Worth* with Robert French again directing.

In spite of the setbacks, the programme is bigger than that of 1981. Wherever you go 200 seats in theatre will not be much of a 200 seats in theatre, and you get our own aspirations. It is determined that the present financial climate should not undermine the STC. That the programmes planned before, cuts were announced should be stuck to and that the 1981-82 project to house the company, and provide a second venue, should happen after 1981.



John Gaden



John Gaden

OKLAHOMA!

The MTC Theatre Royal Company with a number of other Australian companies including Edgemoor and the Adelaide Festival Centre, have plans a three production international *Okla!oma!* starting April 82. John Duxbury will return from the London production to play Guthrie but in spite of extensive auditions in London, no leading lady could be found to play opposite him as Laurey. James Harcourt and musical director Ken Cook are now desperately searching for a suitable Australian singer in the *Ukiah* and *Harriet*!

NEW SEASON: STATE THEATRE COMPANY

The State Theatre Company's first plan next year will be their festival contribution, a new play by Patrick White called *The Sexual Obsession* not to be directed by Jim Sharman himself but by Neil Armfield, which certainly raises eyebrows over their particular. Sharman's first decision will come with the new play, a "dark reading" of *A Highamshire Apple* by Thomas Asschold is then to direct Louis Nowra's *South of the Border* which would relate to the first act of *Amadeus*. Richard Williams picks up with *Widow Corcoran* and *The Children* and then a first play by Bill Haining called *John's Cove*. Adelaide will be seeing Sharman's first piece of direction, Klaus's *The Prince of Nothing* and finishing up the year will come a Nowra written Company workshoped piece called *John's Cove*.

All these productions will be playing in repertory throughout the year — a year which Sharman means to use to build up the most difficult kind of theatre. He will be employing 12 actors with whom he intends to develop a company style and a training particularly in new work, the focus on the ensemble, he will be led by the three classics. A throughline running through the 82 season is "the link of power".

Another change will be that the company will be directed by someone as the Libby Theatre Company.



John Duxbury

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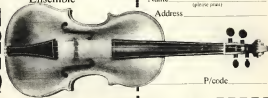
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SNOW BUZZ

By Norman Kessell

As 1981 draws to a close, Sydney theatregoers at least can look back on what has been a generally successful year. I cannot write last-hand of other States but of our subsidised companies the *Sydney Theatre Company* and the *Ensemble* (despite the cruel blow it has suffered) should be well content with both their artistic and box office achievements, the *Nimrod* suffered a slight deterioration in programming and performance standards, the *Q Theatre* has well sustained the quality of its work, the new regime at *Marian Street* got off to a shaky start, but appear to have recovered somewhat with *The Shining Hour* and its end-of-year staging of the musical, *Once Upon A Mattress*.

Of the commercial, the *MLC Theatre Royal Company* has obviously had a best year yet, but it is poised to see *Her Majesty's* dark at this time of year, following the darker-than-hoped-for demand *Frost*.

Of the others, the *King O'Malley Company* scored again, this time in association with the *SFC*, in a first-rate repertory season of alternatives under the company's title. *Shogun*, the *Popera Company* battles bravely on at the *Bondi Pavilion* and the *New Theatre* descended with what in my book is one of the year's most outstanding shows, Nick Brough's *The Warblers*. My list of the year's best shows would have this second only to *Douglas Hewitt's The Man From Maitland*, followed by *Chicago*, *The Doctor*, *The Liberation of Shogun*, *Murder* and *I Ought To Be In Prison*.

It is still too early, at the time of writing, to know much of what is in store for next year, except that the two major musicals Australians will see are something old in *Oh! Calcutta!* and something new in *Jesus Christ Whinger* at the *Elizabethan Theatre Trust*, which is sitting on the rights to a few others, may also stage a revival around next August. Among the possibilities I believe are *M. J. Fox's Lash*, *The Sound of Music* and *Shogun*, of which my guess would be the last-named.

All AETT systems are well go, I hear, for next year by the *American Ballet Theatre* and the *Sadler's Wells Ballet*.

One thing quite certain for 1982 is that ticket prices will run all over. This was inevitable anyway, what with inflation and rising costs, but *Theatre Board* obviously has made it an immediate reality for Sydney's *Finiscentia*, one of the eight theatres totally deprived of funding. For its



production of Australian writer *Mike Byrne's Elbow-Elbow*, which opened appropriately on Nov 11, it jumped its prices from \$8.00 weekdays and \$9.00 weekends to \$9.90 and \$10.90 respectively.

Because of their subscription systems the *Nimrod* and the *SFC* cannot follow suit until the new year, but the former will go up from \$1.90 to \$1.95 and the latter from \$4.00 to \$5.00. As the general managers of the *SFC* (*Donald McDonald*), *Nimrod*, (*Bruce Pollock*) and *Ensemble* (*Rosemary Jones*) all say, they have long counted ticket price rises as being counter-productive. Like their counterparts all over Australia, they will be seeking to limit such increases by employing every possible economy in production. What a way to have to live!

Chris Westwood, coordinator of Sydney's *Women and Theatre Project*, has asked me for having elsewhere referred to this as being sponsored by the *Nimrod*. She notes that the project was funded by an *Austlian Council Limited Life grant* and that the *Nimrod* "generously offered a small desk in a crowded room and access to telephones and photocopying". She did not mention the *Nimrod* theatre space and its in-built audiences also made available, available assistance no matter what were the financial arrangements.

That, however, is to initiate the success of the project which by its completion this month will have 10 shows available to producers, entrepreneurs, individuals and theatre companies anywhere. Heading the list is *David Hume's A New Disposition* in comedy directed by *Christine Kalish*, music by *Sam de Jong*, design by *Melody Cooper* and performed by *Valerie Butler*, *Bevly Blackmore*, *Suzanne Dudley*, *Jenny Hays*, *Gillian Hyde*, *Deborah Kennedy* and *Jenny Ludlum*. This will be presented jointly with the *Nimrod Theatre* for six to eight weeks from Dec 12 and again at the *Adelaide Festival* next March.

Sydney Theatre Company's most successful production in 1980 was *Chorus of Begonia*, given a third revival last month. The 49 performances of the original show at *Sydney Opera House* attracted an audience of 101.87 percent capacity. Next best was *Simon Gray's Choir of Piers*, with a 99.07 percent capacity for 35 performances.

Actress *Lynne Perriam* has played so many parts and roles that when she told friends she was going into a show called *Once Upon A Mattress* they said "What! Again?" She had to explain that in this engaging musical based upon a fairy tale (at Sydney's *Marian Street Theatre* until Dec 20) she is a princess. Heydenah, maybe, but still a princess.

Tony Barker and Elizabeth Alexander in *SHORTS*

Budgie Fisher — Director of two of *SFC's* successful shows

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Artistic Director: John Harding
Overture to The Magic Flute, Mozart, Piano Concerto in D minor No 20, K 455, Mozart, soloist: John Winder, piano, Symphony in E flat K 543, Mozart

Monday, January 4 Sydney String Quartet

Leader: Nathan Wale
String Quartet in G minor (Quartettsatz), D 703, Schubert, Piano Quartet in E flat, Op 44, Schumann, soloist: John Winder, piano, String Quartet in C, K 515, Mozart, soloist: Iritia Morozov, viola

Tuesday, January 5 Australian Chamber Orchestra

Artistic Director: John Harding
Duets in D, K 136, Mozart, Duets in F, K 138, Mozart, Concerto in E for Violin and Strings BWV1042, J/S Bach, soloist: John Harding, violin and
Wilma Evans, harpsichord, Serenade for Stringing 5, Op 22, Dvorak

Wednesday, January 6 Sydney Virtuosi Ensemble

Leader: Murray Kham
Sonata in E flat for Wind Sextet No 1, J/C Bach, Duets in B flat (Feldperstet), H 43, Haydn, Duets in E flat, K 198a, Mozart, Serenade in E flat, K 375, Mozart

Friday, January 8 Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra

Conductor: William Reid
Overture to The Marriage of Figaro, Mozart, Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, K 525, Mozart, Symphony No 1 in D, Op 25 ("Classical"), Prokofiev, Symphony No 41 in C, K 551 ("Jupiter"), Mozart

Saturday, January 9 St Philip's Chamber Orchestra

Conductor: Michael Dyer
With the Concert Hall organ
Concerto in C for Flute, Harp and Orchestra, K 297a, Mozart, Andante in F, K 616, Mozart, Andante con moto, Fantasia and Fugue in B flat, Bach, Soloist: Concerto No 1 in G, Op 4, Handel, Soloist: Michael Dudman, organ, Concerto in G for Violin and Orchestra, Mozart, soloist: Rodlyn Streckfus, violin, Motet "Exultate Jubilate" for Soprano and Orchestra, Mozart

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Other Mostly Mozart attractions

Midday Music

Recording Hall, 11am and Noon Sunday, January 3

The Sydney Piano Trio: Harry Clarke, violin, Hans Gyom, cello, and Seryl Potter, piano. Piano Trio No 4 in C, K 548, Mozart.

Recording Hall, 11am and Noon Sunday, January 10

Roltraud Schneider, violin and Daniel Mensacovich, piano. Sonata in D, K 308, Mozart. Adults: \$1.50, Pensioners, students and children: 30c

All day seminar

Reception Hall, 10am

Saturday, January 9
Presented by the Sydney Opera House Trust and the WEA. "The Life, Times and Music of Mozart" presented by a panel of WEA experts headed by Christopher Nibbolls. Tickets \$20 (lunch and after noon tea included) available at Opera House, agencies and WEA House

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spotlight

THEATRE BOARD CUTS — FLAGSHIP OR FLEET ?

by Ken Hurler

The bad news is that funds from the Australia Council to the Theatre Board for 1982 have been cut by 10%. The basic allocation for 1982 is \$5,793,000 a cash reduction of \$620,000. At its October meeting the Theatre Board faced with some hard decisions, withdrew funds completely from eight professional drama companies including Ensemble (NSW) APG/Pratt Factory (Vic) and Hole in the Wall (WA) and made cuts across the board of between 15% — 20% to the major companies. The Melbourne Theatre Company, for example, was cut back by 20% to \$625,000, the Sydney Theatre Company reduced to \$264,000 and Marmos was cut by 15% to \$249,000.

The cuts to the Music and Theatre Board reflect a change in philosophy both in Canberra and within the Australian Council. Canberra argues that it has held the line so far as the arts are concerned by reducing the total vote to the Ministry of Home Affairs (that grab bag of a junior ministry that includes the arts and sport) by a mere 2%. What Canberra does not say is that the Australia Council's share of that vote has dropped from a 34% to 33% for 1982 and that this reduction is reflected in the cuts to the performing arts companies.

The cuts reflect the self-help philosophy of the Fraser Government. The new Minister Mr Ian Wilson's response to the wailing and gnashing of teeth from the companies was to say that there would be no supplementary grants and that he would not ask Cabinet for emergency funds. The Minister believes that the companies should try to solve any financial problems by earning more money at the box, by persuading state and local government to increase their subsidies and by seeking sponsorship from

individuals and corporate organisations, particularly big business.

This is cold comfort to the drama companies who have been doing all these things for years with limited success. The annual report of the MTC, for example, concedes that it has had little success attracting private sponsorship. The Challenge Grant Scheme which holds out the carrot of a further \$322,000 to the chiefs of the Theatre and Music Board obviously has the Minister's seal of housekeeping approval. Significantly the Theatre Board itself composed predominantly of theatre practitioners resigned, unsuccessfully, the imposition of the Challenge Grant Scheme.

A small number of high rollers get their funds direct from Canberra through a piece of fiscal sleight of hand called "single line appropriation". This means that the Australian Opera, Ballet and Elizabethan Trust Orchestras receive very nearly what they ask for. They are not accountable to the Council through its Boards and procedures, they can lobby Cabinet direct. This year the Australian Opera and Ballet each achieved a cash increase of 10% at a time when the Australia Council's total funds are 12% less in real terms and the Theatre Board itself was cut by 10% (\$620,000).

If ever there was a time for the Australia Council to persuade the Minister and Cabinet that the Opera and Ballet should no longer have the privilege status and be made accountable to the Council, it is now. The new General Manager of the Australian Opera explains away a deficit of \$700,000 as a mere 7% of turnover. Dr Pascoe, the Council's new Chairman, was not too alarmed at this figure. The Council, however, has consistently refused to allow drama companies to budget for a deficit and called upon them to explain their deficits before making next year's grant.

The Opera's special position continues despite the failure of the Melbourne season, the threatened sacking of 22 of its members and an announced season which contains no new Australian work. The Ballet is in disarray, the Sydney season of Joan Lide has been cancelled and the conflict between the dancers, the board and the administration seems incapable of resolution. And these are the two companies which the Minister claims are the "national flagships" that should be especially encouraged "in

the pursuit of excellence." If anything confirms the philosophy in their case of opera and ballet as an elite activity sucking up a larger and larger share of the tax dollar, then it is the current management and policies of the Opera and Ballet.

The idea of "flagships" is offensive to many of the chiefs of the Council and has only been dreamed up after the event to give some respectability to the political clout of the Opera and Ballet with Cabinet. Dr Pascoe is not sanguine about changing the situation. As he says "Even if they were put under the Theatre and Music Boards, and we cut their grants, they'd go straight off to Canberra. It would all be unavailing." Sadly, he might be right, but it's worth a try. What is galling to the drama companies is that the Opera and Ballet, the so called "glamorous" majors are the best placed to attract big money from business. Corporations like to see their gifts up the re on stage, no company is keen to fund a company for its general activities even with the available tax incentives. What point is there in having a flagship without a fleet?

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY
— 20% CUT

John Sarners, Director, "I think it is a pity that instead of trying to turn theatre companies into fundraising organisations, the Australia Council should not concentrate its energies upon fundraising in Canberra."

John Sarners: MTC





Paul Heslop, STC

STATE THEATRE COMPANY, SA — 20% CUT

Paul Hes, General Manager: "The consequences of a \$45,000 cut in STC's annual grant is enormous, but that applies to every theatre. There is a ray of hope at least the performing arts can speak with one voice. The historic dilatory sense of unity has become a leitmotif here."

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY — 30% CUT

Donald McDonald, General Manager: "If the Federal Government recognises that the Australian Ballet and Opera need increases for inflation, how can theatre be so different? There is no logic to that. I also reject the spurious concept of the Minister, Mr Wilson, that the Opera and Ballet are 'national flagships'. It is theatre to suffer because it doesn't have a national company? Surely the state companies collectively represent a national theatre flagship."

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY — 10% CUT

Alan Edwards, Artistic Director: "The QTC gets a 10% cut which is a 32,000 cut in real terms. The most vulnerable work is the most interesting. I think any company can sustain cuts in the main house programme, but what we will probably have to sacrifice is our new Tangent programme of alternative work. This will be a disaster, it's the most important thing we have done recently. Basically the cuts mean conservative programming and that is not what we should be about."

NIMROD — 15% CUT

Steve Pollack, General Manager: "Mr Wilson can justify a 10% increase to the AO and the AB as 'the flagships'. Nimrod, the flagship of Australian drama, has done most to promote the indigenous performing arts here in Australia and overseas than any other company. Unless Nimrod can raise funds from other sources the company might have to cease carrying out activities such as workshops and readings of Australian plays, which do not pay for themselves."

HOLE IN THE WALL — 100% CUT

Edgar Melville, Artistic Director: "None in the 15 or so years during which I have worked in theatre in WA, have I known there to be such a large number of talented young actors, designers and technicians as are now emerging. How ironic that this should manifest itself during a year in which of the two subsidised theatres in Perth, one should be threatened with closure by the withdrawal of the Federal Government's annual grant. Great talent will, of course, always emerge whatever the handicaps — but we in WA must be forgiven for feeling that it is now more likely to emerge elsewhere."

Edgar Melville, *Master of the Hall*



CHALLENGE GRANT SCHMIP

As an inducement to the companies, the Australia Council, of its own initiative, has set up a system whereby the companies may receive an additional \$1 from the Council for every \$3 cash the company raises. There is an upper limit of between 50% — 75% of the total box office grant. For example Nimrod could claim a further \$22,000, the MTC \$58,000. The amounts available are relatively small — the total is \$140,000 for the six boards. Of this, the Theatre Board's share is \$282,000 with an amount of up to \$100,000 set aside to promote the scheme nationally. The Council argues that if the companies reach their targets, then the extra grant plus the contribution from the private sector will just about put the companies back where they were before the cuts. The companies reply that they have already budgeted to raise a certain amount from the private sector and this has already been taken into account and cannot be seen as additional income.

More importantly, the companies point to a central dilemma. If the companies are energetic and raise their target amounts (or more) then the self-help government in Canberra would be entitled to say "Look, we told you there was private money out there. You don't need all that subsidy". If the companies fail to rise to the challenge, then the government could say "The arts don't have a firm community base or business support, why should the taxpayer support them by subsidy". It could be a no-win situation. The companies, however, accept the principle of private support to *top up* the grants, not as something in lieu.

Already the companies are looking towards more "commercial" seasons in 1982. The Sydney Theatre Company will produce Shaffer's latest hit, *Twisted*, at the Theatre Royal, and Nimrod are planning a production of *Death of a Salesman* with Warren Mitchell at the Seymour Centre.

As part of a national campaign to restore the grants the Confederation of Professional Performing Arts (COPPA) is lobbying Federal MPs and arranged the national Theatre Cross Day of Thursday November 19, with lots of hoopla and speeches at curtain up. The Australia Council which does not see the Challenge Grant Scheme as the strategy to meet a particular emergency has devised a badge for "length" with a halo around it.



TALES from the VIENNA WOODS

by ÖDÖN VON HORVÁTH, translated by CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON

director Aubrey Mellor · designer Vicki Feischer · with Robert Alexander · Robert Baxter ·
 Brandon Burke · Cathy Downes · Jon Ewing · Ronald Falk · Michele Fawdon · Ivar Kants ·
 Barry Otto · Genevieve Poot · Deidre Rubenstein · Anna Volska

NIMROD UPSTAIRS · NIMROD UPSTAIRS · NIMROD UPSTAIRS · NIMROD UPSTAIRS · NIMROD

THEATRE AUSTRALIA, DECEMBER 1991 13

spotlight

by Mardy Amos

The theatre programme for the 1982 Festival of Perth promises to be as stimulating as that of 1981, but with even more emphasis on European theatre. Presentably Festival Director, David Blackmore, was encouraged by the response in Perth to The Zagreb Theatre Company's *The Liberation of Skopje* by Dusan Ivanovic and *I Colombiani* — the two modern-day clowns in the Comedien dell'arte tradition — for we are to get companies from Italy, France and Czechoslovakia in 1982 as well as artists from England and America.

The first production will be Le Theatre de L'Orfèvre's *The Black Cat*, using and adapting the traditional techniques of ancient Chinese shadow puppetry they will tell the tale — based on an old French nonsense song — of a little boy who lives in a doll-hou and who sets out on a fantastic voyage of discovery with his friend, a black cat.

The Black Theatre of Prague will present *A Work of Dreams* at His Majesty's Theatre with a ten strong ensemble under Artistic Director Jan Svec. The seven fantastic dreams of a little taxi-driver make up the programme, which has received high critical acclaim.

Italy's most famous theatre company, Piccolo Teatro di Milano, was formed in 1947 to preserve and develop the great Italian tradition of *commedia dell'arte* and they will present *Harlequin And The Others* at His Majesty's Theatre. The play is a collection of scenes and texts from Italian theatre from the Middle Ages to the 18th Century which tell the story of *Arlecchino* (Harlequin) the mischievous "poor servant" versus "the others", the authority figures of the times, and this theatre of masks will show the traditional types of the various epochs.

David Blackmore rightly refutes the use of the word "clown" in connection with the Festival and puts his money where his mouth is in a combined programme, *Beans and Beans*, which will run at the Civic Theatre Restaurant, which has made a name for itself for popular comic entertainment. In

PERTH FESTIVAL PREVIEW

the first half of the show French comedian Julien Chagrin mixes mime and the spoken word, and the second half will be taken over by America's The Brass Band who are often referred to as "a musical Marx Brothers" and who provide highly polished brass music and visual comedy.

Also from America is *Miss Marganda's War* by Brazilian playwright Roberto Athayde, an award-winning play which has had 55 productions all over the world. A one-hander, it features Eucile Parsons, probably best known here for her work in films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Rachel, Rachel*. Miss Marganda is an apparently respectable teacher conducting an eighth-grade class, but as the lesson progresses she is revealed as being paranoid and sexually frustrated.

From England, and the Festival of Sydney, comes the London Theatre Group with its founding director Steven Berkoff.

Perth's local theatre companies are well represented in the Festival. The National Theatre Company at the Playhouse will present the world premiere of Dorothy Hewson's new play *The Fields of Heaven* which is set in the fictitious town of Jerusalem in the Great Southern district of Western Australia and deals with the clash between old-established settlers and migrants and the threatened annihilation of a fragile ecology — and it also has a turbulent love story thrown in.

Although *The Hole* in the Wall Theatre has been refused Federal funding for 1982, they have been granted a temporary reprieve by the decision of the W.A. Arts Council to allow them to use their \$50,000 grant for 1982 in the last six months of the year thus enabling them to go ahead with their production of Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*. This satirical comedy had great success at London's Royal Court last year and more recently at Nimrod. Also at the Hole in the Wall will be a late-night show — a play by West Australian Mary Gage, *Up Yaw* is *Paddy Pranno* which met in Montmartre when the painter was 26 and struggling for survival.

A new West Australian venture which aims to produce "new, innovative and indigenous theatre" will make its debut at the 1982 Festival; the Swan River Stage Company will present *The Dreamer*, a second play by W.A.'s leading Aboriginal writer Jack Davis (the first was *Kulbarri*). The play deals with the changed life-styles of a family of Nyngah, or Aboriginals of and from the South-west W.A. who have little left of their traditions and way of life.

In addition to theatre, there will of course be a varied programme of music and film, which this year includes Moshe Mizrahi's award-winning *I Saw a Letter to My Love* with Simone Signoret, and Katherine Kut's *The Breath of the Rose* (Poland). On the lighter side artists will include Chick Corea and the husband and wife team of Cleo Laine and Johnny Dankworth who will be making their tenth visit to Australia.

The visual arts will be well represented — they are indeed already in evidence with the Festival Poster designed by Sir Sidney Nolan, who will attend the Festival as Guest of Honour and who has created for it a new series of paintings entitled *Kangaroo*, based on D.H. Lawrence's novel of the same name, which will be exhibited at the Underprint Gallery of the University of W.A. — a fortunate gesture for this, the thirtieth birthday of the Festival of Perth!



John J. Gorman — the play at the Hole in the Wall

BERKOFF: FEASTS OF EMOTION

by Paula de Borch

The irrepressible Steven Berkoff, who has been described in the London Press as "the best of the great actor-managers" and "the most obsessive of Britain's few directors of vision", returns to Australia in January 1982 with his London Theatre Group, for a ten week tour — initiated and organised by the Playbox Theatre Company. The LTG will be performing Berkoff's stage adaptation of *The House Of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe, which began life as a "work-in-progress" at the Edinburgh Festival, and subsequently toured Holland and Germany, before playing in London at the Hampstead Theatre Club and the National Theatre. Berkoff will also perform Poe's *Tell Tale Heart* — a piece that has not been performed in public before — as a short solo curtain-raiser.

Berkoff needs no introduction to avid theatre-goers. His blistering and satirical play *East*, which explodes the raw conflicts of East End life, arrived in a blaze of controversy for the 1978 Adelaide Festival. The then Opposition spokesman for the Arts, Mr Hill, wanted the "punk play" cancelled — "If this play is presented I believe the Adelaide Festival of Arts as a cultural festival will be tarnished for all time." (Adelaide Advertiser, 17-11-1977.) Nonetheless *East* proved a triumph with local critics, and attracted enthusiastic audiences later in four other capital cities.

Afterwards Berkoff staged on in Sydney to direct his adaptation of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* for the Mirod Theatre, which opened in August. The same production happened in March 1979 at the Melbourne Theatre Company's Russell Street Theatre. Within a week of opening, the Melbourne season sold out, and patrons were queuing to purchase aisle seats. This caused one critic's "gorge" to rise so much, that six weeks into the season he facetiously wrote: "Tickets are so hard to get you'd be excused for thinking Russell Street was staging a show with the bill shared by Sutherland, Nanczy, Kamahl, The Royal Shakespeare Company, The Bee Gees and the Berlin Philharmonics. But all that is being presented is Berkoff's adaptation of a novella about a clerk who turns into a dung beetle..." (Neil Jolley — *The Age*, 10.3.1979.)

In style, *The House Of Usher* is closer to *Metamorphosis* than to *East*. It tells the tale of a cadaverous shell of a man, Roderick Usher, who is on the point of extinction due to his own anxieties and fears. He shares the family home with his cataleptic sister Madeline, whom he loves incestuously. Roderick has written a letter to his friend Edgar, asking him to come to visit urgently — and upon arrival Edgar finds the couple very much changed. Berkoff himself plays Usher, "a man holding onto his senses with a gaspener thread, exploding, raving, turning words into tumbledown despair. His ashen face is the mad mirror of his house, a house that depends upon the noble Usher for life and death." According to Steven, "The House outwardly manifests the crumbling nature of Roderick's inner decay." Berkoff plays both Roderick and the House — "I always like plays where I'm put in an impossible situation, because it gives the greatest possibility for inspiration..." One theatre commentator noted in 1977 that "the epitome of the London Theatre Group's work is manifested in *The House Of Usher*... when Berkoff appears as Usher, he passes from being man to house with frightening accuracy and ease."

Berkoff acknowledges that his major influence has been the "ecstatic prophet of theatre", Antonin Artaud, whose ideas for the "theatre of cruelty" and book of impassioned manifestos, *The Theatre And Its Double* have inspired many theatre artists seeking alternatives to naturalistic drama.





These well-known would include Jean-Louis Barrault (France), Jerzy Grotowski (Poland), Peter Brook (England), and Joseph Chaikin (United States). Steven Berkoff's production of *The House Of Usher* juxtaposes Artaud's ideal of pure, formal spectacle, with images of horror — and has elicited the following responses from British critics — "bizarre but brilliant", "has the haunting fascination of a beautiful but horrifying dream", "a highly performed gothic blasphemy", "a fluent nightmare, consistently beautiful to look at", "pure theatre", "a phantasmagoric nightmare", "unquestionably the most stylised and ritualised work to emerge from contemporary British Theatre".

Since Steven Berkoff was last in Australia (1978/79), he has been highly productive, and his extraordinary versatility and energy have continued to amaze observers.

After directing *Metamorphosis* in Sydney in 1978, Berkoff flew to Israel to present it in Hebrew, and the production was voted the Best Production of the Year. While in Israel he wrote a play, *The Murder of Jesus Christ*, an ecclesiastic work which portrays Christ as a revolutionary figure whose misguided strategies lead to his downfall. In 1979 he was back in Melbourne for *Metamorphosis*, (still recovering from the wearying effects of hepatitis), before returning to the United Kingdom to stage his highly innovative *Hamlet* at the Edinburgh Festival, playing the title role himself. Around this time he wrote a play called *Greek*, which he loosely based upon the Oedipus myth, but set in the East End — and characteristically he gave the ending an unexpected twist. A return visit to Israel ensued to stage his *Agamemnon*, for which he again achieved "Best Production" status.

February 1980 saw the premier season of *Greek* at London's Hall Moon Theatre, and the play re-opened later in the West End for a six week stint at the New Arts Theatre. This was the first time that Berkoff had directed the London Theatre Group in one of his own works, without playing a role himself. Between the two presentations of *Greek*, Berkoff's *Hamlet* opened the Jerusalem Festival and played in Haifa, before touring Lithuania — Ein Gavi, Kfar-Saba, Ein Hashovet and Arad. The production then returned to London's Round House for a four-week season. Concurrently an acceptable, less daring

Hamlet was playing at the Royal Court Theatre and attracted the critics' praise, while actors, directors and young people favoured Berkoff. Screen actor Dustin Hoffman saw the London Theatre Group's *Hamlet* twice, and went backstage to offer his congratulations.

Early this year (1981) the same *Hamlet* was much acclaimed when it toured Germany and Belgium, and Steven has been asked to tour it through Europe during 1982. He returned to London after *Hamlet*, and wrote a new play, a two-hander titled *Decadence* — which is "a scurrilous, bawdily comic caricature of upper class miscreants and aristocrats", according to one reviewer. It premiered at the New End Theatre in July and was an outstanding success, with the season extending. Steven Berkoff played the dual role of Steve/Les, while Linda Marlowe played Helen/Sybil. After a visit to the Edinburgh Festival, *Decadence* transferred to the West End, where it is playing until Berkoff prepares for the Australian tour.

Apart from Berkoff's own directing, writing and acting, Australian companies have staged two of his works during his absence. The Sydney University Drama Society (SUDS) mounted *Agamemnon* in August 1979, and the Riverside Trucking Company presented the world premiere of *Woe* in April, 1981. *Woe*, which incorporates rock music, is (like *Early*) a parody of East End life, but hung upon the cruelty of two adolescent street gangs. It is a pity that Peter Barclay's stunning, imaginative production did not get a capital city viewing!

The *House Of Usher* tour has been organised by Melbourne's Playbox Theatre Company and will be a highlight of what promises to be an exciting first season for 1982. The tour kicks off during the Festival of Sydney, before playing Perth, Melbourne, regional Tasmania and Hobart. Due to the Adelaide Festival, and Berkoff's own engagements after the tour, Adelaide will not see *The House Of Usher*.

Steven Berkoff, who is regarded as an "underrable original", and the leading figure in British non-establishment theatre, describes his works as "heats of a mission for anyone who can remember how to feel."

Steven Berkoff in *Requiem For Usher*
The House of Usher Photo: Roger Minton

REG LIVERMORE, about to star in *Barnum*, talks in New York of his life and times to KARL LEVETT.

The colours of my life
Are beautiful and bold.
The purple glow of indigo
The gleam of green and gold.

As Phineas T Barnum, Reg Livermore will soon be singing these words eight times a week in *Barnum*. It is the first time from the show, and seems most suitable to describe a professional career that has indeed been "beautiful and bold". Add to this the fact that Reg is also a painter who has held several one-man shows, throughout Australia and the Cy Coleman song sounds tailor-made.

BIG APPLE RED

Reg Livermore spoke of his colourful career while in New York preparing for his role in *Barnum*. He has already spent several weeks here working with the New York School of Circus Arts, which is the training segment of the Big Apple Circus. The star and centre cast of the Broadway *Barnum* were trained at the Big Apple Circus, as well as the National Tour and the London Company. "I'm the sixth," said Reg. "There was Jim Dale, Tony Deland, Stacy Krosch who did the national tour, Michael Crawford for the London production, Mike Baruya who has now taken over the Broadway role. I'm doing tight-rope walking, juggling and other skills that I might be able to use in the show."

The results of the training have been mixed. "Basically it's the wire which I've taken to very well... in fact I've taken to it quicker than anybody, so they tell me. I'm supposed to juggle, not the best at it. I'm resisting that but I've promised myself I'll practice when I get home. There's a trick with a rope swinging out over the audience, we're working on for the Australian production."

EARLY RAINBOW

Energy and physical dexterity have always been part of a Livermore

performance. One of my earliest memories of Reg at age 15 is his own production of the pantomime *Worship Gnome* at Mosman Town Hall dressed in a large feather boa, riding a bicycle and singing "I'm Just A Girl Who Can't Say No." "I used to harness a group of schoolmates every year... on Boxing Day we'd start rehearsing. I was the prime mover, of course. I just wanted to act and I saw no one was going to offer me a job so I had to create my own situation."

During this period Reg began at the Independent Theatre School and attended there for about a year. "This was a formalised training process and I resisted it. I've always resisted things like this. I still do. I don't really like being told how things should be done. I think that in the theatre there are no rules." Whilst in class Reg began appearing in independent productions.

First Children's Theatre productions, then Shakespeare, Shaw and Tolson and the *Angel* with John Alden. "I treasure those times." Exposure and experience were suddenly his.

"By the time I'd reached leaving age I decided that the theatre was definitely my career and that's where I was heading. Of course, I knew at a long time before that. It was probably the first thing I ever knew."

Reg was then hired as general understudy ("and moving the scenery") for the Philip Street revue *Round the Loop* covering for Gordon Chater, Max Oldaker and Barry Humphries. At the same time he began classes with Hayes Gordon, who was to have a considerable influence on the young performer. "Working with Hayes and my involvement with the Ensemble Theatre was probably the most important education that I had."

"I broke away for a trip to England to look around there." He worked as a chorus boy in a touring version of *Miss the Duke*. "I was engaged as a dancer... how, I don't know."

After a year he was back at the Ensemble Theatre. He worked there for the next two years in plays such as *The Dreamer*, *The Double Dealer*

and *Miss Louisa Brown*. "By 1961 I decided I wanted to step out. I was beginning to feel that I was locked into a dogma, perhaps. I needed to get out and stretch my wings and apply what I had learnt in a broader theatrical situation. And I suppose I always wanted to make something of myself and Hayes made it very clear that he didn't want stars in his system. I believed, and still believe, very firmly that theatre can't survive without stars and the star system. All of us more or less want some sort of gods that we can believe in. And people have their gods in tennis, cricket and football and every other aspect of the performing arena. The theatre needs it. It also needs it to attract people into the theatre."

REPERTORY ROSE

Reg then joined the Union Theatre Repertory Company in Melbourne. He spent two years there doing a different play every three weeks. He did Shakespeare and Shaw as well as contemporary plays by William Inge and Ibsen. Reg's first effort as an author came with the Union Rep. He wrote the book and lyrics for *The Good Ship Water Ratbitch*. "A bastardised crew of RMS *Parthian* and *The Pirates of Penzance* billed as a 'musical romp'. It didn't do awfully well, but it didn't deter me. I've had lots of that since then."

"Then I returned to Sydney and as I really hadn't made any mark on the Sydney scene, it was a matter of starting all over again. After sitting around I got my break at the behest of a friend. I did *Post Card* with Lindsay Burrows. From there to a replacement in the Ensemble, then to the Old Tote for *The Importance of Being Earnest*. "While doing *Ensign* I was appearing at the Ensemble on Saturday afternoons in *The Canterbury Ghost* which was a connection of mine and John Fraser's. It was colossal and proved very popular."

Reg was invited by the South Australian Theatre Company, and appeared in the opening season. Included in the traditional repertory was Reg's second attempt at authorship

COLOURS OF MY LIFE:

with book and lyrics for *West of the Buck Swamp*, a Western musical.

From there back to Sydney for the John McKellar script *A Cup of Tea, a Beer and a Good Lie Down*. This was an enormous success, playing Sydney for over a year, and later Melbourne and Canberra. "I didn't feel the wall I had in it was terribly rewarding and I felt rather trapped. However, I stuck it out because I'm a professional of nothing else."

All this experience in verse, repertory and composition had been gained by the time Reg had reached the ripe old age of 26. For a young performer, he already had a great deal under his belt.

TELEVISION GREY

"At that stage I was invited to do a children's programme on ABC Television called *Crankypack* which was a recreation of an English series of the same name. That went very well and on the strength of that, the ABC offered me a night time television show, called *The All Right Now*. It wasn't exactly a variety show. They were billed as 'mini-musicals'. I came up with the format and the ABC got a writer out from England. We didn't see eye-to-eye at all. With him we wrote a script that had nothing to do with me and my personality as I had conceived it. It was judged a failure and caused a lot of heartbreak. I went into a serious decline after that." Well, for several weeks anyway.

A stint at the Doncaster Theatre Restaurant followed, on a double bill with Kamal "on his way up." Then back on television in the last days of the *Markus Rooming Show*. "When Markus died, they did another show called *Anything Goes* — a replacement Markus, but with even less freedom — but that too died very quickly and I was beginning to feel that I was some sort of jinx to these projects."

With Peter Baty, an old friend, he produced the revue *Guine Fero* in Canberra. "as a way of surviving, as no one was offering us a job, we again had to create our own employment." Back to the Doncaster for an updated

version of *The Mikado* called *Mikado 89*. Ironically while performing there, he was offered the comedy roles in the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas for the Elizabethan Opera's Australia-wide tour. This was something he had long wanted to do, but he was bound to his contract for *Mikado 89*. "I felt thwarted. Dennis Olsen got those roles and has been doing them ever since with great success — and deservedly so."

"By this stage, I seemed to have exhausted so many areas — the state theatre companies, television — it seemed to me from then on I was going to repeat myself."

ROCK MUSICAL MAUVE

"In 1989 *Rain* came to Australia and my sister was in it and I was only interested because of her involvement. I didn't want to know about it — in fact I felt that theatre was sliding irrevocably into the dusty Rubicon-land! Perhaps I was jealous because something new was being allowed to happen and I wasn't part of it. However, when I saw the show, those prejudices vanished. I was emotionally worked over, and amazed by what I was seeing. Then I knew that I had to be in that show. I didn't care how. I pestered my way into it. I was the last person they wanted — but I grew my hair and I went on as a member of the tribe at \$70 a week." Gradually he worked himself into larger parts.

The experience proved therapeutic, both personally and professionally. "Suddenly my career, which I thought had come to a halt, took a side road, maybe it was the highway, and I'd been on the side road up until then. I went off in a direction I hadn't anticipated." It's interesting to ponder on what would have happened to Reg Livermore's future if he had been able to accept that G and S contract he was offered.

Suddenly instead he rode on a new wave of rock musicals. *Rain* was followed by *Jesus Christ Superstar* as a replacement for Harold. "Three minutes, I had, 48 minutes a week. But at the same time I'd started to extend that role to five minutes and I was

starting to feel gaily. Then I was given the *Rock! Horror Show* by Jim Sharman. Well, this was tailor-made for my scribbles — or unscribbles. But also in that show by the time I felt that after eight months I'd added half an hour of my own dialogue. It was naughty, but that was the reason people were coming. They wanted to see what I'd say that night. I found the part insatiable — there wasn't much there that the audience needed to know about Frank N. Furter, because he fascinated me — so I gave it to them."

BETTY BLOKKBUSTER GOLD

It was then that Les Durr offered to star Reg in his own one-man show. "I'd never thought about it consciously, it'll be come to me." Eric Durr had the Reg in *Ballroom* as a cameo. "Within three months of his asking me, the Regs had been converted in a live venue, the material got together and on it went as *Rock! World! Bigger! Foller!*"

For Reg, this was Eric Grant help. "It was the ultimate freedom. I was given open slather by Eric — it was like flying blind. *Rain's* success wasn't immediate. It didn't get good newspaper coverage — some newspapers even refused to review it saying that they didn't cover 'that sort of show.' It took four months before it was really bumping in theatres. It was only that Eric had faith and believed that there was an audience out there, that the show survived. We did eight months followed by a seven months' tour."

"I pursued a delicate theme with *Wonder Woman*, my next show. I was examining the role of the militant female. It was concerned with women rising above their hardships and domestic situations — taken to the point of absurdity. It was mighty sympathetic to women and certainly I showed the crossness of the Australian male. The audience response to this 'exploratory exercise' was just as enthusiastic and it had a ten month run in Sydney and several months on tour."

THE MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA 1982 SCHOOLS PROGRAM

the Old Man AND THE *TITAN*

1

On Earth, Tom Dodd has 85 candles on his birthday cake this year, but he is not having much fun. Everyone says, "You're too old for that! You're too old for that!" "Just wait and see", says Tom. And he blows out the candles, packs his bag and sets out on his adventures.

On Titan: T299 Zero Minus 4 has calculated her age to be 1,000 years, 46 hours, 3 minutes and 26 seconds. To celebrate her 1,000th birthday, T299 Zero Minus 4 is sent to Earth on an important mission. What happens when the Titan meets Old Dodd?

**WRITTEN AND
DIRECTED BY**
DESIGNER
AGE LEVEL
LENGTH
PRICE

ANNE HARVEY
CAROLINE JONES
Infants and Primary
50 minutes
\$1.00 per student or
\$2.00 per family
Two puppeteers

CAST

AESOP'S FABLES

2

A selection from the fables told by the legendary Greek slave.

Aesop was the slave-storyteller who lived in Greece about 550 years BC. Some of the fables he told were original, others came from even older sources, probably Egyptian, Babylonian or Indian. Many ideas from these fables have become everyday expressions. In this show a number of the fables, both popular and less well-known, have been turned into short entertaining plays for puppets.

**WRITTEN AND
DIRECTED BY**
DESIGNER
AGE LEVEL
LENGTH
PRICE

RICHARD BRADSHAW
BEVERLY CAMPBELL JACKSON
Infants and Primary
50 minutes
\$1.00 per student or
\$2.00 per family
Two puppeteers

CAST

YOURS and MINE

3

Written and presented as a comedy, the situation of this play is to encourage children to see that there are different attitudes to ownership, property and possession. The play is aimed at both infants and primary and combines music, songs and visual effects with an underlying storyline.

**WRITTEN AND
DIRECTED BY**
AGE LEVEL
LENGTH
PRICE

ANNE HARVEY
Infants and Primary
50 minutes
\$1.00 per student or
\$2.00 per family
Two puppeteers

CAST

Puppet Power

4

Puppet Power is a lively and inventive show during which the puppeteers demonstrate how to make and use a variety of puppets - finger puppets, rod and glove puppets, joint puppets and marionettes. Puppet Power has been devised as an entertainment which will stimulate interest in making and using simple but effective puppets.

DEvised BY
AGE LEVEL
LENGTH
PRICE

RICHARD BRADSHAW
Infants and Primary
50 minutes
\$1.00 per student or
\$2.00 per family
Two puppeteers

CAST

Not available in N.S.W. country. Plays in Queensland (Term 1), Victoria (Term 2) and in Sydney (for one week only).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT
M.T.A. 106 GEORGE ST THE ROCKS 2000.

REG LIVERMORE

NED KELLY BLACK

Reg's next development was the musical *Ned Kelly* for which he not only wrote book and lyrics, but also designed and directed. "It was a very real step towards creating something Australian within Australia on a scale that had not been seen before." Its failure is a bitter memory for Reg.

"What were wrong? It opened in Adelaide and I believe and maintain that it was a political situation there, the Adelaide Festival Trust acts in an entrepreneurial capacity, receiving government funds - there are lions in Adelaide who believe that funds should be given only to 'worthy causes' such as the State Opera Company, not to such trivia as a musical. I was angry that they were suggesting that the audience that might have enjoyed *Ned Kelly* had no right to, or to be even suggested to. So the papers got onto it, and it was destroyed there in Adelaide. It did in fact go to Sydney but already word was out against it.

"So I had a run for a year, then came *Saved Con* which I suppose was an ode to Australian apathy. It was about my anger - one of the papers had said in a review about *Ned Kelly* about me that 'some one should put a run on this boy's imagination'. I thought it was one of the cruelest things said about anyone, anywhere. So *Saved Con* was about all those things people don't want to talk about. Same format, with black and cynical humour predominating."

Again, Reg found a responsive audience for this darker material. This time he played shorter seasons of three months in larger, commercial theatres in both Sydney and Melbourne.

"As a farewell gesture, I thought we'd have a nostalgia evening, a look-back to fondness" - so *Son of Bono* was born - "a concert of favourite hits."

LONDON BLUE

Then after that I was taken to London by the Stage and Organisation and I did a thing called *Saved Con* 'Saved Con' in my mind was Australia. Hal Prince had been out to Australia and he liked what I was

doing and so between the London hippest office and Hal they got me on there." The London *Saved Con* was not the Australian show but rather like *Son of Bono* in being an amalgam of selected pieces from all the previous revues. The milder and the more universal of the numbers were chosen.

"Well it was a well known fact that I wasn't a suprow. I certainly felt my rank - it wasn't apathy, it was horror - the English were horrified." As one preview, a more extreme sketch was tried. "On that particular evening a riot broke out in the theatre. Someone rushed down the aisle and shook his fist at me and said 'I'll give you a week in this town.' One side of the theatre was arguing with the other. I was standing there, stunned. I still had 12 minutes of the sketch left. There was an Australian correspondent in the house that night, so that the local papers were filled with the horror of Reg in London.

"The theatre had a lot to do with it. It was real West End where they do all these sale plays. The sort of thing I was doing should have been done in an experimental house. Nobody had ever heard of me. It was a marketing problem and London theatre was and is going through a very slack period and they don't want my kind of thing. They want mainstream."

CIRCUS TENSE

"While I was in London I was asked to be in *Bonnie*. I was looking for an exit from my one-man shows, at least for a while - and I knew I'd have to work again. And I was thinking about my following, the audience that I attracted in Australia. I certainly wanted to take them with me.

"It's an energy performance that's required. I think the show's reasonably optimistic, which is why I wanted to do it. It says to people don't be afraid of things, don't settle for dreary old lives when you can have something a little more spectacular if you want it. Despite the black comedy sometimes, all my shows have been optimistic statements - about hope and courage and survival."

FUTURE RAINBOW

"Yes, I think I'll go back to one-man shows. I feel it within at the present.

"I'm beginning to think about the things I want to say. I'd like to find a way to present them differently so that they were new and surprising all over again.

"I'm vaguely interested in film. I haven't been offered anything as yet. But that's another area that I'll have to manufacture myself. Either I write myself or find some one who wants to write for me.

"Then there's the possibility of New York in 1988. Hal Prince is keen to present me here in a one-man show. Again, the marketing would be the problem. It would have to be Off-Broadway, I think."



Reg Livermore performing, for *Bonnie* in New York

Reg Livermore colourful, creative, dynamic, ambitious. As *Bonnie* he'll soon be singing:

The splendour of a sunrise
The dazzle of a flame
The glory of a rainbow
The put 'em all to shame.

Give him half a chance and an empty stage and he'll do just that.

THEATRE feature

by Justin Macdonnell*

How does one start to characterise any Festival? Some, of course, have a sufficiently specialist profile, whether it be jacobinism or choral singing which point a direction. Others, one can say are "about the Arts". But, in a Festival like Sydney's with over 500 individual events ranging from show-jumping to Lieder, it is hard not to start talking about "festivalism" potential and "low incidence of rainfall in the month of January" rather than come firmly to grips with this extraordinary celebration.

Sydney's Festival was born in 1977 as a great public bank of free entertainment in the parks and popular events for all ages and tastes. Commencing on New Year's Eve with a huge open-air concert on the steps of the Opera House and running its giddy way through to finish on Australia Day, traditionally, but not invariably, January 26 (This year as a result of some twisted bureaucratic thinking, it is February 19). It has defied the knacker and in some cases gravity, to stay afloat and become a permanent feature of the city's year.

In a program which totals 29 theatre productions and over 40 art exhibitions alone, it's difficult to isolate characteristics that might make the Festival work in an artistic sense. An on-going aspect of the Festival since its second year has been the premiere seasons of new Australian plays presented in association with the Ensemble Theatre which in 1982 will be called "The Ensemble Festival of Playwrights" sponsored by Qantas. From a comparatively modest beginning at the Stables Theatre this important venture now plays to capacity audiences in the Philip Street Theatre with four plays being showcased each week.

1982's line up is *Indian Summer* by Justin Fleming, which deals with the remarkable 34 days reign of Pope John Paul I; *I've come about the Savage* by Cragie Cronin; John Smythe's *Conscience* and a political comedy, *The Right Man* by Kenneth Ross.

One can, of course, philosophise endlessly about what one is trying to do in assembling a Festival package. Our primary venue, theatrically, in 1982 is the Seymour Centre and, considering what would happen there that might not amply be a duplication of other theatre in Sydney either at that time or through the year, we considered that if there should be a policy it would be something like "simple tricks done staggeringly well". We wanted to place in contrast two elements which seemed to be fundamental to an idea of the theatre. On the one hand the physical, if you like environmental, skills as one half of the playwrights' and actors' craft and, on the other hand the verbal literary aspect which is its natural concomitant.

Almost coincidentally, as it happens, our venue points to the contrast. Up-stairs, we have in the Everett Theatre a new production, *A Week of Days*, by the renowned Black Theatre of Prague. Next door in The York Street Theatre, Steve Berkoff's London Theatre Group at the beginning of an Australian tour, (in association with The Playbox Theatre) in Berkoff's adaptation of Edgar Allan-Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Both companies have, of course, been exposed on varying degrees to Australia before. It is interesting that these two companies coming from very different theatrical traditions and, however, use movement, the play of light and darkness and, to a certain extent, an almost physical awareness as the basis of their communication.

St Thomas Borchum and Dylan Thomas must be considered, surely, in their very different spheres of activity as two of the greatest wordsmiths in English this century. They seemed a good starting point from which to develop the idea of the verbal and literary half of our theatre tradition. The Melbourne Theatre Company's *Amnesia* starring David Ravenwood is almost a double entry in these stakes inasmuch as it is a highly verbal play about an extraordinary musician who,



Ray Henwood as Dylan Thomas in *No Good Boys*

ironically in many quarters, is at least as well remembered for his use of the English language as for his music making.

Its companion piece in the Downstairs Seymour Centre is a production from New Zealand, *No Good Boys*, with Welsh actor Raymond Henwood in the role of Dylan Thomas. The play itself, which draws closely on Dylan's own writing, is set in the New York bar where he spent his last, fatal, spectacular hours.

A tradition which the Festival, in association with Nimrod Theatre has developed over recent years has been the production of a children's play on Clark Island in the middle of Sydney Harbour. From 1978 to 1980 *Treasure Island* and *Peter and the Bunn* drew families from all over Sydney for their month-long seasons in this unique setting. In 1982, Nimrod will be presenting *The Cask of Amperbury* by John Ramez in a production by Chris Johnston.

Tradition aside, lets look now at some of the innovations in 1982 which might themselves become annual events. The first and undoubtedly

FESTIVAL OF SYDNEY



David Parker in MTC's Macbeth
Photo: David Parker

most spectacular next January will be a concert performance by the Australian Opera of Verdi's *La Traviata* in the Sydney Domain with Dame Joan Sutherland in this, one of her most famous roles, with principals and chorus of the company together with the Elizabethan Trust Orchestra under the baton of Richard Bonyng. New York's Central Park has long been famous for its splendid summer evenings of opera out-of-doors. Whether it takes off and becomes an annual event or proves simply a great once, it is an important first, both for the Festival and its collaboration with the Australian Opera.

As well as showcasing structured work, however, it's important for Festivals, if they are to genuinely stimulate and encourage activity, to provide facilities for work in progress and for personal artistic innovation. Two new venues will assist this process in 1982. The first is the Festival Club to be located in the recently refurbished Plunkett Public School in Woolloomooloo. The Club, which will operate on the basis of monthly weekly memberships and nightly admission at

the door, will have a range of performance and workshop activities from photography and audio visual through dance, mime, puppetry, drama, poetry and music. We hope that it will be a talking point and a talking place for artists, visitors and the public during the period. The venue will be licensed and have meal service.

The second new venue will be in the midst of Hyde Park, where City Scape, a semi-enclosed theatrical structure will, both physically and from a performance point of view, continually up-date during January our perceptions of life in the City. In the City Scape, the public will be encouraged to participate through raincoats, giant images and through the construction of a mural, to expand their daily experience of Sydney in active creative terms.

At the Sydney Town Hall, which is the focus of the Festival's own music programme, another but much more small scale innovation will be taking place. Over a series of three nights the remarkably polymathic musical tastes and urbanity of James Murdoch will combine with the Seymour Group and a range of Australia's compositional talent to present three key concerts colloquies on the state of Australian composition today. Five young composers, Trevor Pearce, Michael Smetanin, Richard Yella, David Joseph, Robert Douglas, will have their works (three of them premieres) scrutinised in the wider context of music writing today. Senior composer, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, whose musical horizons over the past 50 years have encompassed all the major musical theatrical forms, as well as music criticism will construct a major retrospective of her life.

Electronic music composers, Graham Har and Martin Wesley-Smith, will conduct "a public conversation" on where this crucial but often baffling area of music "is at" in the 1980's in the last of these seasons.

In the not-so-contemporary music area, we are also celebrating the Bicentennial of Joseph Haydn in a concert which will exhibit his mastery

of form in a programme of two major concerts, the *Symphonic No 49* and the secular cantata, *Arader on Aron*, sung by the capricious mezzo, Patricia Price. In the music-theatre area, we have what we believe may be a world first, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Laisse* in association with the radical and innovative young Seymour Group under the direction of Stuart Challenger (by courtesy of the Australian Opera). The Festival invites the public to take not one but two fresh looks at this crucial masterpiece of our time. Firstly the ensemble, with male alto Hartley Newham, in the title role, will present the work in concert. After the interval they will appear in a staged production by James Murdoch.

And, last but certainly not least, two extraordinary and totally convincing divas will sing in their inimitable way. Soprano, Rita Hunter, whose name is almost a by-word for all that is biggest and best on the operatic stage, will give her first-ever recital in Australia in a programme of arias and duets (with Lauris Elms) from the roles that have made her a major star.

Rebeka Archer, after an absence abroad of almost 12 months, working and studying in Britain, Germany and North America, returns for two major concerts in the Sydney Town Hall. The first, an all-Brecht recital of songs written by her three major musical collaborators, Weill, Eisler and Dessau. The concert will also coincide with the release of Archer's *Broche* recording for EMI which she has recently completed with the London Sinfonietta. Her second concert nearer to home, is a programme of jazz and country in the style that's made her a major musical identity in this country.

Obviously, these are highlights only of what has become the activity that has transformed Sydney's summer from the deadest month of the year into the liveliest. But, you don't have to take my word for it, ask David Jones!

* Justin Maidment is *Entertainment Canada* in the 1981 and 1982 Festival of Sydney.



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On the razzle

by Irving Wardle

Whether or not British playwrighting is in a healthy condition, we are certainly enjoying a golden age of theatrical adaptation. The first prize in this department goes unquestionably to David Edgar for the RSC's *Nicholas Nickleby*—but even without counting that heroic piece of work, there are numerous other writers—among them Christopher Hampton, Michael Frayn, Thomas Kilroy, Trevor Griffiths—who have promoted the craft of adaptation to a new level of artistic self-respect.

The reigning virtuoso of the group is Tom Stoppard, who specialises in adapting previously inaccessible foreign work to the English stage, and who has followed up his version of Schnitzler's *Undiscovered Country* with *On the Razzle* (Lyric/Henry) based on *Finesse des œufs et de cochonnettes* by the allegedly untranslatable Johann Nestroy. Thomson Walder beat Stoppard to this text. But just as *The Matchmaker* comes as a revelation if you see it after *Heidi* *Dolly*, so does *On the Razzle* if you see it after *The Matchmaker* or even *Dolly* *Linn*, for a start.

In the fast-spending old days, a production like John Wood's with its five sumptuous sets and large cast tottering with long speeches would have been enthroned in the West End. Only the subsidised stage can afford this kind of

thing today, but the effect is still one of an amateur commercial hit. For this there is a penalty to be paid. Nestroy's Viennese shorn of local dialect and multiple puns has given Stoppard a springboard for his own verbal somersaults. But where Nestroy had good reason to outshine word-play as an anti-censorship device, in Stoppard it is there exclusively for the laughs.

Likewise his treatment of the main plot-line in which two started shop assistants sneak off for a night on the town so as to acquire a "posh" they can look back on in the long years of drudgery ahead. Any parody this may have held for Nestroy's own audience is thoroughly purged from Stoppard's popular version.

However, its tone is absolutely consistent, and is instantly established in the person of Drisdale Landon's Zander, the dignified shop owner who keeps his employees in overworked penury and foreshadow the morning that would remove his niece from the till, while paying piousness court to a well-to-do milliner at his Grocery Company uniform. What Mr Landon does is to concentrate on Zander's abominable wit and vanity, thus depicting any action that he might be a despicable boss. You can hear his spurs prying a mile away, like the alarm-clock in Captain Black's crocodile, but there is nothing to be feared when he does arrive.

Nor is there much point that the trunks are taking a risk. Their only moment of

glamour comes as the pointless record of two girls in a horrendously expensive restaurant and they rapidly disport in when the apprentice Christopher boldly puts in an order for oysters and champagne. Christopher is played on screen by Felicity Kendal in the likeness of a small defiant boy; and if the spirit of rebellion lingers anywhere in the show it is in her man-voltently quick-witted performance.

You could argue that by removing bullying and fear from the play, Stoppard has thereby snipped its financial mainstay. The answer to that is that he has substituted his own kind of force. I mentioned that *On the Razzle* contains plenty of jokes, but the point is that it contains nothing else. The whole text is made up of puns, syntactical misunderstandings, contradictions of fantasy, and verbal disorienting mirrors, which point's compare to create an atmosphere of spiralling fancy once the piece gets into its stride. You cannot claim this is a new form of farce as we have no other writer who could manage it. But it certainly counts as the most amazingly sustained farrowk you to come out of Stoppard's box.

In that connection to my claims for the adaptation boom, Brian Fawl's version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* played Dublin's august Theatre Festival into the old stage Irish bog. Presented by Field Day—the pioneer Derry-based company that created the mystery *Translations* (reviewed in the August issue of *TJ*)—Stephen Rea's

FRANCE

production came as a crushing disappointment — with its Captain Beckett's Verulam, its ploddingly underlined local references, and its total insensitivity to the breathing pains in the text. It left me with only two positive memories. First, an emotional Irish line 'I'm starting the first thing in the morning one of these days', and a scene where Moll Flagg's universally scabbed Baron takes over the stage. At the doctor's newspaper quotation 'Balzac was married in Berdachev town', Irma and the young soldiers start making up a guitar song; the Baron then goes to the piano to join in and spoils it by getting the harmonium wrong. 'I'm lost,' he says, 'I can't play without music.' That, I submit, is a genuine addition to the Chekhov heritage.

Beckett at 75

by Colin Duckworth

(Colin Duckworth was invited to participate in the *Beckett Colloquium at the Centre Pompidou*, part of the *10th Paris Festival d'Automne*.)

Paris has done Samuel Beckett proud for his 75th birthday — a little late in a sense (the devoted day was 13 April) but better late than not at all. The city is strewn with bits of Beckettiana, largely due to the collaboration between the Centre Georges Pompidou (and showing no mistake), the Renault-Bernaux Company, and New York University in France.

Live on stage we have seen Madeleine Renaud's *Oh les Beaux Jours* directed by Roger Blin, *Come and Go* and *The Low One* directed by Lee Bruce, *Former Journey* directed and played by Christian Colin, Beckett's own production of *Krapp's Last Tape* with Rik Clachey. To come are *Texas, Fin de Partie* (with Pierre Chabert), *Beckett's Other Impromptu (Du Je)* (directed by Alan Schneider with David Warshaw), *Texas pour rien and Compagnie*.

In all six theatres are involved, as well as the Grand Foyer of the Centre Georges Pompidou, which gives over to a Beckett exhibition (sponsors of productions from several countries, but none, alas, from down under), and the Centre's small theatre, which is showing a number of film and TV productions of Beckett's works, notably Michel Marcia's *Two men on a bench*, *Fido* (US version with Buster Keaton), and English version with Max Wall) a splendid *Godot* with Leo McKern and Max Wall, *Shreds/Glitter Tape*, *Bel est Chien* and *Not A Question* 1 and 2 (Beckett's latest work, which was first shown publicly, on German TV, on 8 October).

That does not exhaust all the offerings, but one can see the stress laid on new work and on adaptations of prose works. Two of these deserve particular comment for good and bad reasons. David Warshaw's *see no doer* in *The Low One* (which he is doing here in the French text), *Le Dégénération* seemed to achieve the impossible task of making something theatrically valid out of Beckett's long anthropological description of the life and habits of dwellers in a cylinder. After being released of our shoes and coats, we were ushered into a totally black cylinder some thirty feet across one half of which was a four-tiered amphi-

theatre. Flooring of thick black foam rubber. For each spectator, a pair of theatre-glasses. With very but sympathetic detachment Warshaw mounts the attempts made by the inhabitants to understand their environment, explore it and escape from it. From a box he produces a set of tiny human figures and twelve-inch high ladders of wire, which he erects within a circle, never passing on his account. Arrived there he places a blinking half cylinder. Only this microscope world is now visible, through the glasses one loses all sense of size and perspective. Then the manipulator becomes one of the inhabitants himself, solitary and naked. A naked woman appears, crouching against the wall, mechanically exhibits herself, is engulfed by darkness again. Although I would have been happier to have Warshaw in an unobtrusive black costume instead of sloppy academic's gear, and am not convinced that the narrator/manipulator/human dweller are best done by one man, this was an intense and moving theatrical experience that we should see in Australia.

By far the most satisfactory of all the productions I saw was *Former Journey*, set, by Christian Colin, on a slap's deck, the narrator addresses not the audience (as Clachey's Krapp does, wrongly I think) but an unseen auditor (in a deck chair, back to audience. A woman in white is standing staring off backstage at the sea. She remains motionless until the final moments, but her role is justified by the constant repetition of interruption she provides. Colin's range of expressiveness, mastery of rhythm, blend of irony, self-mockery and acute sensitivity made this a memorable performance worthy of its setting and genre (rating test).

The two colloquia (Beckett in our Time' and 'Beckett and Dramatic Experiment') were hurried and left little time for such of us to develop more than obvious statements. Robbie-Gruber was lively and witty, Ruby Cohn deep and serious. John Calder and Georges Deleury (full of insights based on years of close acquaintance with Beckett, the great American director Herb Blau scarcely got into his 50th birthday party before the whistle was blown on him. As for Beckett he has left town, sending the organisers, Tom Bishop of NYU a letter similar to the one he wrote at Nobel Prize time, saying he was all just too much for him, etc. etc. He has safely returned on 16 November.

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Missing creative imagination

THE GONDOLIERS

by Janet Healey

The Gondoliers, by Gilbert and Sullivan. Canberra Philharmonia Society, Canberra Theatre. Opened October 29.
Director: John Hutchinson. Musical Director: Colin Fawcett.
Dancers: Keith Young. Choreographer: Keith Bam. (Continued)

This was Canberra's first local G&S for some time, so it was surprising on opening night that the house was far from full, especially in view of Pflaum's record of near-capacity audiences. Even the presence of the Governor-General, with entourage, did little to raise the emotional temperature.

The direction was competent, but just got by. Its chief virtue was the negative one of not getting in the way, its chief fault a lack of attention to detail. For instance, I can't believe that the Duchess of Plaza Toro would permit herself to disembark from a gondola unaided, and Garry Waddock's unaidable and unhelpful Duke should never have been allowed to get away with upstaging his Duchess's song. There was also a tendency to plant the chorus in pre-arranged lines around the stage, which did nothing to lessen the illusion of spontaneity.

On the positive side there were some good performances. Jim Pope as the Grand Inquisitor turned in a splendidly belaboured performance, Judith Bauer as Cécilia contrived to be unreasonably despondent and sharp as a knife-edge, and Peter Wood's Marco was a study in innocence and grace.

Keith Bam's choreography was excellent, and well within the scope of an amateur company. (I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt and assuming that he was not responsible for the repellently awkward movements that disfigured nearly all the concerted numbers.)

The design, by Keith Young, had a fundamental integrity that did much to enhance the production. The second act set in particular displayed just the right touch of absurd whimsy in its blend of the renaissance East and the Brighton Beach.

But apart from the general lack of lustre which can afflict opening nights, especially with an amateur company, there were



Joan Doolittle in *Canberra Philharmonia's* *The Gondoliers*. Photo: Ross Gould

problems which were unlikely to be solved with more performances or bigger audiences. The one that plagued me most lay in the orchestra, when the Vice-Royal party entered to the strains of "The Queen". I honestly thought that the basses and cellos had not arrived. A glance at the programme revealed that in a 28-piece orchestra there was one cello and one double bass. Admittedly, Sullivan's scores don't need a lot of bass tone — but this amounted to none at all, which called for some last-minute adjustments in the audience.

But the inaudibility of most of the singers can't be blamed entirely on understated choir leader. The hard fact is that these voices are not large enough for the Canberra Theatre. The voices suffered badly — an inexcusable failing in Gilbert and Sullivan — and even lamplarity with the opera was no help.

All in all, this production was a mixed bag. The cast was not lacking in talent, and there was evidence of thoughtful hard work in the direction. But the only missing spark of a creative imagination was missing.

Full of promise

EYES OF THE WHITES

by Michael Le Moignan

Eyes of the Whites by Tony Strathairn, Nones of Productions, Sydney. NSW. Opened November 4, 1981.

Director: Ned Austinfield. Designer: Bill Haycock. Lighting Designer: Jonathan Cohen, Stage Manager: Glenn Johnson.

Cast: Jane Seymour, Roddy McDowall, Peter Sarsgaard, John Poole, Alex, Tom Lockwood, Peter Whitehead, Sara Lockwood, Charles Mahoney, Yola Milos, Sam Baskin. (Continued)

If there are any good theatre companies still operating in Australia in the mid-eighties, it is a safe bet that they will be performing the plays of Tony Strathairn.

The seventies was a rich decade of growth for the Australian theatre, and yet most of the plays of lasting worth were written by half a dozen people, with a few "one play writers". One major new playwright per year would be a very good average to maintain. The most recent to emerge from the creative chrysalis have been Louis Nowra and Stephen Sewell.

Eyes of the Whites does not quite signal Tony Strathairn's arrival as a major playwright. It does announce that the Nones had once again discovered a new writer with an original voice and boundless potential. I hope he will be able to allow his original gifts to mature and flourish.

Most of the action of the play takes place in pre-1914 republican Pagan New Guinea in 1949. "Doctor Tom", who has spent twenty years building a lucrative business at the expense of the natives, is standing in a local election against the young son of one of his black servants, a member of Suzanne's Pagan Party.

The whole master makes his first appearance dressed as Father Christmas, with a sackful of party wrapped fishes to his voters. In twenty years of explanation he hasn't bothered to learn pedigree or communication with his electorate is limited. Doctor Tom's racism is barely disguised and Peter Whitehead had the audience heartily laughing him from the first scene.

Two New Guineans actors, Roddy McDowall and John Poole, Alex, brought a wonderful intimacy and pathos to the roles of Juna, the mother servant, and her son Peter, the aspiring politician/revolutionary.

Juna's dilemma is exquisitely painful. In one of Master Tom she rejects her own son and complicitous for the white lifestyle she has learned to admire. She adopts the



daughter of the house, Seta (Shirone Mahasany) as a surrogate daughter, as she has adopted what she imagines to be a white lifestyle and values, and she is bewayed by him.

Kathy Walker as Mirra, the Master's long-suffering wife, balances beautifully with Whitford's pigpersonism, sanctimonious slob. Under the articulate direction of Neil Armfield, the cast complemented each other's dramatic moments in a very assured way. The performance I saw, which to be fair, was not the First Night but a Preview, was peppered with long significant pauses which wasted the energy generated, but doubtless the timing will tighten with performance. Seta's final sobbing fit I found unnecessarily melodramatic.

One of the most compelling performers was that of Ron Becko, as Dr Mbese - a Nigerian inspector from the World Health Organisation. He was refreshingly calm about the outrageous racism all around him, a voice of sanity and maturity. There was an underlying control, an easy self-confidence about the portrayal that suggested Ron Becko is capable of great things. In fact I think Nimrod should seriously consider signing him for *Goethe*!

The play has passion, both in the beliefs it communicates and in the emotional involvement it demands from the audience. There are some brilliant comic insights, a strong political argument and some interesting perceptions of character.

Three qualities are more or less essential in a playwright: the first is fluency, the second is urgency and the third is a wide compassion. Tony Strachan's dialogue flows well at times very well; his liberal and humanitarian assumptions ring true, but instead of a warm and compassionate understanding of his characters, he offers

Fern Whitford and John Pasalis stars in
Benson's Eyes of the Whites

us an unrelenting castigation of white colonial guilt. The play is thereby distanced precisely where it should be intimate.

Because Master Tom is drawn as such an obnoxious bigot, we are able to re-direct any uncomfortable feelings aroused by the play into hatred of him as a convenient scapegoat. The New Guinean mother and son, on the other hand, are portrayed with such nobility of spirit that they are emotionally touching, but scarcely credible.

The political argument, that colonial systems lead to exploitation, is incontrovertible but hardly original. Pre-Independence Papua New Guinea is depicted as a Garden of Eden and White Australia as a tainted Adam and Eve, to be removed as soon as possible, before they contaminate the innocent local population with the acquisitive materialism. *Mera rupa* but so what? I kept hoping something unexpected would happen, but it never did.

The playwright has not seen his characters in the round, but from his own pre-determined point of view. Strachan was brought up in colonial New Guinea and there is something very authentic and deeply personal about the play, but he ultimately weakens his case by giving the opposition no strong arguments. Master Tom's blathering about private conscience when he is about to sell the villagers' land for a brickworks, can hardly be taken seriously.

The one-sidiness of the play is a serious flaw. It lacks subtlety and surprises. Nevertheless, *Eyes of the Whites* is an impressive and powerful piece of theatre, full of promise.

review

Searching and funny

MOVING IN

by Adrian Wistle

Moving In, by Matthew O'Sullivan. World premieres at RIT, Theatre Wagga Wagga, NSW. Opened October 11, 1981.

Director: Colin Schumacher, Lighting: Richard Caldwell, Stage manager: Nicola Machedi. Cast: Justin Byrne, Kim Ralph, Warren Pigman, Jenny Leslie, Stuart Cadkin, Denise Tan. (Photo omitted)

Matthew O'Sullivan's *Moving In*, a searching and funny play about the ups and downs of domestic relationships, enabled new RIT director Colin Schumacher to establish in one stroke definitive evidence of directorial prowess.

The play is engaging, sure it explores with insight and wit the verbal pingpong that marks any relationship. O'Sullivan's six characters in a Blue Mountains cottage bounce off each other in defining and adjusting their relationships, with the pivotal figures of a reasonably self-sufficient actor and his questing spouse providing a comic focus to the counterpoint of rich humorous dialogue.

O'Sullivan's ear in fact is tuned with baroque precision to the cadences of reasonable, revelation and assumption that give such frequency to all relationships. There's truth here, a rational compass of human Australian wit, yet the play also has important and truthful things to say about communication between people, and how often just as much as verbiage can create barriers to understanding between people.

Colin Schumacher paid his cast accordingly, besides drawing scrupulous attention to singing detail. The RIT Theatre has now been partially redesigned with a two-sided thrust stage flanked by tiered seating, and his achievement in accommodating his cast to this rather more revealing playing area was considerable.

Schumacher's players uniformly brought brightness to domestic friendships and predatory nuances alike. Justin Byrne's actor and Kim Ralph's ex-wife were critically assured, bringing notably to the tautly orchestrated final scene a compassion and discretion that touched the heart. Stuart Cadkin's deadpan schoolteacher was a small masterpiece of controlled timing, while Warren Pigman as a chauvinistic architect, Denise Tan as the schoolteacher's beautifully griffoned and Jenny Leslie as the chauvinist's wife were, in their various ways, equally entertaining.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC EVERY BURGLAR HAS A SILVER LINING LA VENIEXIANA

by Suzanne Spenser

Cyrano de Bergerac by Edmond Rostand, translated by Louis Nemes, Sydney Theatre Company, Opera House, Sydney, NSW, Opened October 17, 1981.
Director: Richard Wherrett, Set Designer: John Southwell, Costume Designer: Barbara Stephens, Lighting Designer: Keith Williamson, Properties: Judith de Jong, Stage Manager: Paula Vanables.
Cast: Cyrano: John Bell, De Guiche: Robert Kennedy, Roxanne: Kellya Percich, Christian: Andrew Molnar, Le Bret: Ron Henderson, Ragueneau: Peter McKinnon, Armand: George Newbern, Mignonne: Andrew Tipler, Rosta: Katherine, Front: Peter Edmund, Hunsley: Paul Warren, Jannis: Russell, Alan Tait, Derek Jones, John Sharvin, Bruce Langford, Graham Harvey, Simon de Borneville, Craig Sydney, Diana Davidson, Emma Williams, Greg Boyd, Victor Huchard.
(Professional)

Every Burglar Has a Silver Lining in *Dans le Palais* by Tim Fiegansmith.

Condalia Productions, Seymour Centre, Newcastle, NSW, Opened October 11, 1981.
Director: Mick Rodgers, Designer: Peter Korte, Lighting Designer: Walter Casali, Stage Manager: Peter Korte, Paul Vanables.
Cast: Burglar: John Allen, Burglar's Wife: Emma Leach, Maid: Susan Spenser, Woman: Emma Leach, Nurse: Barbara Stephens, Doctor: Michael O'Connor.
(Professional)

For a moment in, and for a moment out are underpinned by Tim Fiegansmith and Condalia Productions, Seymour Centre, Newcastle, NSW, Opened October 16, 1981.

Director: Mick Rodgers, Designer: Peter Korte, Lighting Designer: Walter Casali, Stage Manager: Peter Korte, Paul Vanables.
Cast: Protagonist: Michael O'Connor, John, John Allen, Emma Leach, Emma, Barbara Stephens, Angela, Emma Williams, Susan, Emma Leach, Michael O'Connor.
(Professional)

Sydney's theatre is still reeling from the special and authorising ones in funding administered by the Federal Government's Institute of Theatre Board of the Australia Council. For new and experimental work the climate could hardly be less encouraging. Two of the bright spots in a bleak month have been return services for two projects, *Stages*.

At the Opera House, the Sydney Theatre Company has at last achieved a three-week season at its rightful home, the Opera



John Bell as Cyrano de Bergerac
Paul Henderson

Theatre, for last year's excellent production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Despite some early problems with the accounts, the play's particular magic works well in the new venue, perhaps because it is suitably operatic in tone and theme.

John Bell's *Cyrano* rewards a second visit in its amazing balance work, a concern of great subtlety and emotional power. The supporting cast is just what Robert Ramsay, Robert Neven and the rest work valiantly to make as large as the plot is thin, and the characterisation (particularly of Roxanne) unbelievable but in the final analysis, it is *Cyrano's* play, his tragedy and his triumph, a romantic wallowing that is self-indulgent but irresistible.

Constitutionally, the other return season has the same combination of a talented company and a witty story. Two Italian plays, one from the nineteenth century, Dario Fo's absurd *Every Burglar Has a Silver Lining* and an anonymous nineteenth century romantic satire, *For a Moment in, and for a Moment out* were presented earlier this year under the auspices of Sydney University's Theatre Workshop. Fo's has been encouraged the use to form their own cooperative to put on both plays again at the Seymour Centre, Newcastle.

Every Burglar is a curious mixture of sophisticated comedy, farce and fairy tale. A burglar (John Allen) paying a professional call on a middle class couple (Barbara Stephens and Emma Leach) gets involved in their marital affairs and petty deceptions. The message appears to be that class corrupts. The play lacks the bite and well-timed malice of Fo's later radical theatre, but there is an amusing naivety about the characters.

For a Moment is a slight but very intriguing play, which seems to offer a rare glimpse of another century's sexual rules, a matter often glossed over by historians. Disappointingly the potential is not fully realised.

The potential of the company is considerable, although they seemed at times to be trying a little too hard, forcing the issue. They deserve better material. In happier times, the Australia Council might have been expected to fund Mick Rodgers and company on a limited but grand scale. Since the current Theatre Board apparently can't afford as generous to the Federal Government's short-sighted, can one only congratulate the members of Condalia Productions as having the courage of their convictions, and hope they will a lot better!

Theatricality the essence

SHORTS

by Helen Munn

SHORTS, Sydney Theatre Kings Cross. Opened October 18, 1981

The Woman Fancily Lays Eggs, *My Shadow Knew* by Robert Knight, *Porn No Rape Trigger* by David Knight, *Onions Along the Dismantling* by Tim Gooding, *Quick Death as Adjunct* by Richard Murphy, *Onion's Onions* by Graham Smith, *Onion's Onions* by Roger Paterson, *As This Where We'd and As* by Phil Morris, *Men Chalk P* by John Marshall, *The Actors*, *Le Alexander*, *Tenness Butler*, *Elizabeth*, *Chances*, *My Chances*, *Sandy Gore*, *John Hanson*, *Robert Hughes*

The Doctors, *Mr Alexander*, *Kerry Dwyer*, *John Hanson*, *Lea Marinos*, *George Wilkin*, *Bobby Brown*, *Phil Morris*, *Brian Thomson*, *Sessions Co-ordinator* or *Lea Marinos* (*Professionally*)

What distinguishes The King O'Malley Theatre Company from others? Bad taste, vulgarity and true blue Australianism, says co-ordinator Lea Marinos of the present season **SHORTS** shown at the Stables Theatre venue. And what is more, he believes, the company tries to break down the traditional barriers between dignitaries and skills in the theatre and performance-media.

That is **SHORTS** we see. Bobby Brown and Lea Alexander trying their hands at directing and Phil Morris moving from the scenes to the stage as a director. Designer Brian Thomson directs too.

The season has been a huge success. An elderly gentleman was weeping over the phone because he couldn't get a ticket for his son, and people were lighting torches at the door when it was there. All in the spirit of the O'Malley Company, says Marinos, who relates the selection of police rates into smut, sex love scenes and alcoholic drinks into rehearsals at King's Cross.

So what made them decide to put on a season of "shenanigans"? Finally, says Lea, The King O'Malley Theatre Company was receiving lots of plays quite unsolicited, and so was the Sydney Theatre Company, but the funny thing was that most were short plays. It could be the television generation, he suggests, writers accustomed to shorter fare. It all led to the O'Malley Company getting an Australia

Council grant which wasn't quite enough to carry the season off with style. This in turn led to the idea of the O'Malley getting together with its antithesis The Sydney Theatre Company ("Chalk and Cheese Productions", says co-director Bob Ellis) to put on a full season of nine short plays.

Turning over the other performance as a personification of "Disunity, contentment, outgoing, lunaticism" in the latest programme was John Hanson, who presided over Tim Gooding's *Onions Along the Dismantling*. A few compliments to the director ("That gutsy little forward Marinos"), a plug for NIDA graduates in the cast and a dig at Robert Hughes ("Well-trained") and Lea Cheeser ("Mellow") were enough to distract from such plot as there was until the climax where Hanson executed the rape.

The essence of the evening was theatricality. Absentee the talking snake in Tim Gooding's play a struggle from vaudeville ventriloquism. In *Porn No Rape Trigger* by David Knight everything led to a performance of superb timing which poked the packed house up and carried it along — light and sound effects at the back of an actor's finger, and an ergonomic "Y" eptage added to the staginess.

No matter that there was about as much substance as in a pavlovian — the evening

was an exercise in style. The best example would be in variations on the theme of death in Richard Murphy's *Quick Death as Adjunct*, where Terry Rader asserts himself as the funniest man in Sydney theatre and Lea Cheeser amuses us, wryly in all permutations and combinations of screen death, only spoiled by some dialogue at the end.

Most disappointing was *Porn No Rape Trigger*, in which a man and a woman play an infinity of roles from Maimed Yiddish to Shakespearean hero in order to attack, each other. "Get out of the audition of my being", says the woman to the man, lured at a theme for the play. But it is a tired theme, and none of Marinos' directorial fireworks or the actors' versatility could disguise the fact. Qualifiers from Sir Thomas Wyatt and the "great" weighed the play down with their pretensions, and by the time Mel Gibson with Sandy Gore that her mother telephoned earlier we couldn't care less whether it is fiction or reality. But the *non de jure* acting in this play, devoted from the subject matter, was a treat. It is, at Marinos says, a wacky play.

Lea Marinos and his partners wanted to get together the most interesting group of people in Sydney theatre for the season of **SHORTS**. They have not failed to do so.



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Abstract

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review

An anti-climax

Interventions

Mississippi: Mississippi by Alison Hightower. Missions: George Brown: Miss P. L. General: General

Chair: Robert Kesting
 Carl Val Hammond, Andy Westerton, David
 Holmworth
 1996-1997

From the pen of Darwin Theatre Group's readers playwright has come a third play centred on the Territory. Simon Houghton's *Manus Dei* (Monday 10) is a potentially funny play about two women on a coach tour from Darwin to Alice Springs. But, disappointingly, the play does not demand the usual reactions of Mr Houghton's craft. Despite a more delightful stereotyping the production missed and the play is not a success. There is no excitement.

Robert Kember did not present a tight play; the action lagged and the opening did nothing to establish midwest respect.

Moving On, Moving On is reminiscent of the dated genre of drawing-room comedy. And in place it is very funny situation comedy. For anyone who has added the dubious benefit of a coach tour to a lot of irresistible conveniences, *Drawn*

Wadsworth as Nimble (or New, but "never say driver") encapsulated the practical, automatic, jaded coach captain with considerable merit.

But Anne Warburton's fading, frustrated, tiny Marlene — the seasoned on-the-maker — was comical. However, her role did create amusement. As the housewife Jenny, making a pretence of independence, Val Henderson was perfectly frumpy, but dull Jenny is the only character allowed any self-determination and while it is a subtle affirmation, Miss Henderson's independence seems to be

This play is flat and almost nothing happens. At worst it lapses into monotony, and the design gave no boost. The play demands empathy—a sharing of the coach plianthophobia. But *Brown Man*, the Group's home, was too warm. The high-voiced group swallowed the actors. Technical problems with the slide projection simulating travel was slow, far too high and cold, and underlined the monotony.

Commissioned for touring in Territory outback centres, the play was necessarily simple. But instead of a cheap production it was fiery. Panned of theatrical excess, it appeared sincere and fresh.

It was an anti-chorus, for an unprepared season of rebuke.

David Madenworth, *Pat Monaghan* and *Arny Markarian* on *HTG's* *Monks* (The Monks On

Irony of fine performances

MARY BARNES NEW SKY

by Jeremy Ridgman

Mary Barnes by David Edgar. La Bote Theatre, Brisbane Qld. Opened October 25, 1981.

Director: Malcolm Haylock. Stage Manager: Julie Ann Williams.

Cost: Mary Brennan (Flowers), Eddie Smith (Acorn), Nick Ripani (Gardener), Kate Mason (Parker Walker), Tony Fletcher (Nigel Rose), Tina Sargent (Marlene), Graham Van Pelt (Mr. Margo), Margo Adams (Roger), George de Vries (Joe).

New Sky conceived and performed by Judith Anderson. QTC Tangara Productions. Edited & Scored by: Geoffrey Old. Produced by: John (H). Directed: Mike Bridges. Lighting: James Brown, Stuart Carl Vane. Music performed by The Fishermen Trio. (Prof: 100)

It was virtually certain that on the first night of *Mary Barnes*, La Bote should have learnt that their fate in the hands of the Federal Government's aggressive attack on the arts should have taken the form of a total withdrawal of their \$30,000 subsidy. Irony on two counts. Firstly, this singularly important play is the sort that, in an ideal world, would have found its way unhesitatingly into the programme of a major subsidised company, that is not the first time La Bote has demonstrated such wisdom and more than proven its lasting credentials.

Secondly, one aspect of this complex play will prove outrageously apt. Not only does David Edgar, an co-journalist, present a diminished case study of the tortured Mary Barnes, but his wider political achievement is to illuminate the compassionate and revolutionary ideals of the 1930s, manifested in the alienation psychiatric community pioneered by R D Laing and Joseph Berke. Eventually, the experiment, of which Mary and her acquaintances are the living proof of success, is doomed to terminate because, as the leader, Hugo, explains, the "wooly bughers" will not extend the lease on the East London house. Economic pragmatism (arguably motivated by cynical conservatism) rules the day. "Plus ça change," the saying might go at La Bote, "plus c'est la même chose."

The play is a remarkable and ambitious statement, woven from various narrative and metaphoric strands. We witness the birth and growth of the community itself,

visually realised in the gradual transformation of a bare room into a living area, furnished with comfortable armchairs and littered with paintings, the fruits of Mary's therapy. As the productive anxiety of the experiment crystallises around Mary's "breakdown", its initiators are forced into increasingly self-analytical postures, the liberal-minded Douglas (for example) dabbling in the adventure but unable to live without rules and leaves, symbolically denoting the end and for he had no enthusiastically swapped for CND badge, sweater and denim boots in the first scene.

Then there is Mary Barnes' own "journey through madness", a desperate nightmare of guilt and self-torture. Neurophany here, no narcissism turning point, but a brief story from Mary herself, to illustrate how her activity emerges from the opportunity to give full range to her own internal compassion and to act her experience objectively in the suffering of others. Such a fusion of self-pity and release: personal drama makes tough demands on the actor and the audience.

The production here, aided by Edgar's specific and highly allusive use of vintage rock songs to punctuate the action, is well placed, but suffers from the need for long, dark moments of stage setting. The cast is strong though there is the odd, aggravating mis-reading of a line and some of the actors fail to handle the peculiar blend of automatic cliché and flamboyant rhetoric in Edgar's dialogue. Jennifer Flowers as Mary and Keith Acorn as her therapist, Fido, shine through however. Mary Barnes is so demanding a role in one could wish for and Flowers displays a surprising grasp of the character's demonic power, formal regressiveness and eventual determination, the psychosis described by the path of the character through the play is crystal clear. Acorn's great achievement is to suggest continually the concern and sense of strings lying behind Fido's energetic, lower-fact unconcernedness. Two fine, complementary performances.

The QTC has fared better with the government cuts, but a 30% reduction in income might just be what was needed to use the curtailings of their "alternative" program. Tangara Productions, which again would be an irony, for after an outrageous start, the venture has come up through with a unique one-person show by Judith Anderson. It is a mixture of mime and music, the style of which is adapted from her training at the Le Coq school in Paris and the content inspired by conversations with migrants, at home and abroad.



Judith Anderson as La Bote's 'New Sky'.
Photo: Larry Wilson

New Sky achieves the all too rare ability to make crime a window on to a whole new landscape of human emotions and reactions rather than a mere exhibition of clinical sympathy. This is not to say that the range of high Anderson's skills is not impressive, but that one thinks to the very intelligence of the observations and comprehension lying behind the performance.

The show is in two parts. The first, all too fairly classical in style, presents the journey of a migrant, a homeless traveller, armed only with a suitcase of belongings and a mirror which, every now and then is pulled out to check the determined and increasingly desperate smile of optimism. Arrival on a ten-scaffolded beach installs the leap into different performance conventions and more complex observations as four brilliantly conceived masks are used to portray a range of attitudes to the new life. This act is richly comic and acutely poignant, the grotesque antiquity of a laughing Turk and the wide-eyed concern of a Greek woman gradually become lived expression of alien, discrimination and tortured isolation. With her final revelation, a demonstrated white Australian, Judith Anderson's vulnerability and skill reach new heights. Imprinted in his own back yard he perfectly seeks assistance of his own assistance in performing garden chores and feigns attempts at physical fitness. How Judith Anderson was able to make a masked character express the sheer relief of finding something to do I will never know.

Mike Bridges' design alternately photographs and transforms, stretched the two Edward Street stage into new dimensions and Carl Vane's shimmering plot comic mood is perfect, not least in its matching of the transition from comedy to tragedy that is the hallmark of the show. Judith Anderson is one of a handful of roles working in this country to such a high standard. The opportunity to have such her apply her technique to her form and perspective is one to be cherished and the QTC must be congratulated for having provided that opportunity.

Outstanding NO END OF BLAME

by Michael Morley

No End of Blame by Howard Barker. Set in Britain. Complete. Production: Radio Ink. 5th Uprated Theatre 15, 1981.

Director: John Gaudin. Designer: Stephen Carter. Lighting: Nigel Levinger. Stage Manager: Walestan Lewis.

Cost: Billie, Ian Binnie, Rachel, Sarah, Robert, Louise, Philip, David, Patrick, Irene, John, Benjamin, Peter, Crispin, Jeffrey, Rachel, David, Michael, Deborah, Kennedy, Alexander, Eric.
(A full company)

No End of Blame is a play which does not hesitate to tackle hard issues: the role of the artist within society, the responsibility of the artist to his own gifts or to the demands of those in authority, the question of the durability of art and its function within society, the role of the outsider, the proud individual who at times makes himself (ironically?) inaccessible and obdurate in the face of demands that he feels are inappropriate to his personal and political situation. These are all serious and worthy questions, but Howard Barker's great strength is to have addressed himself to them in a language which is flexible, concrete, expressive, done with argument when the situation calls for it and yet sharp in its satirical pointing of irony of the arguments advanced. It is an outstanding, perhaps even a great, play certainly. Of all the contemporary plays I have seen in the last eight years, it has been the one which has most engaged my emotions and my mind.

Barker has been particularly fortunate in receiving a production as distinguished as John Gaudin's. Having read the play in advance, I was conscious of the quality and interest of the writing in the first act but somewhat dubious about the second act, where the principal character, loosely based on the Irish Marxist theorist James Connolly, moves from central and various Europe to England. All of these doubts were swept away in the production. Scenes which had seemed a trifle muddled on paper shone on the page come up on the boards of the director and the actors as alive, immediate and very funny.

Especially memorable were the scenes on the RAF base, when Billie (the cartoonish artist) is addressed the art crew in some particularly lofty tags, following in the footsteps of Bernard Russell as one of a series of distinguished guest speakers. Barker does not resist to coarse and



Gaudin's *Radio Ink* at 5th Uprated Theatre. Photo: John Barker

obvious comedy, rooted on the idea of a distinguished speaker addressing men who are about to go off and probably meet death. His targets are of course larger and more varied than that. Moreover, he does not neglect the scales in his protagonists' favour. And it is perhaps this which is the most distinctive feature of the play, the level of argument throughout, the way in which positions are stated and revisited and then subjected to reappraisal and to reclamation from other characters.

In a strong cast, Geoffrey Rush as Billie and Deborah Kennedy, in a number of roles, stand out. Later in particular made much of her varied characterisation, comedy, convincing and Rush's portrayal of the mature Billie, especially in the second half, was notable for its precision and careful observation. Robert Grahb's George suffered a little from the fact that the dramatist allows him to voice out of sight for lengthy stretches of the play, but nevertheless his performance, especially in the earlier scenes, was up to his usual standard. And his portrayal of a Churchill

official in the second half was quietly witty and belongs in the galaxy of memorable characterisations he has provided over the last months. In short, all the cast deserve high praise, but particular mention must be made of Peter Casavoly who, in two

roles, showed yet again what strength and presence he can bring to apparently minor parts.

John Gaudin's direction, his first major piece of work, was very subtle in places and displayed a keen ear and eye for detail and particularly for the comings of the play. At the same time, it made no concessions to the arguments. The only note of criticism that might be levelled at the production could be at Stephen Carter's design, which seemed somewhat over-elaborate and heavy at times. There were some fine ideas, notably the opening and closing sequences, but in between, there were also some scenes which seemed to be shrouded down somewhat by an excessive reliance on technical sleight of hand.



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For further information please contact—

Deborah Trarier,
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AMADEUS A NIGHT IN THE ARMS OF RAELEEN

by Garric Hutchison

Amadeus by Peter Shaffer. Melbourne Theatre Company. Melbourne Theatre. Vic. Opened October 14 1991.

Director: John Sumner. *Design:* Anne French. *Music:* Arrangements: Helen Gilbert. *Lighting:* Jamie Lewis.

Cost: Saloni, Frederick Panlow, Mozart: Bruce Myles, Ferdinand, Pauline (Clotilde) and Bruto (Leone) (Mozart) in MTC's *Amadeus*. *Photo:* David Parker.



Costumes: Sally McKenna, with Douglas (Rafael, Gary Davis, David Horner, Robert Lewis, Norman Kaye, David Cunningham, Arthur Harsanyi-Smith Graham Brown, James Taylor, Bill Rogers, Anne Phelan, Julie McMillan, Beverly Dunn, Rhonda Crane).

(Production)

A Night in the Arms of Raelen by Clive Gorman. Physics Theatre. Melbourne Vic. Opened October 1 1991.

Director: Amanda Linstead. *Design:* Anne French. *Stage Manager:* Karl Roth. *Lighting:* Robert Gilbert. *Cost:* Richard, Sam Jones, Mary, Peter Panlow, Rita Rose, Charlotte, Bruce, John Larking, Nick, John Wood.

(Production)

It would be foolish to deny that Peter Shaffer is a master of his craft. For sheer theatricality, pace, performativity, and use of the theatre's resources, and, yes, imagination, grand themes, for achieving effects that can only be achieved in the theatre, ones that don't work on TV, film or in a book, for entertainment, value for money, he can hardly be beaten. Your Berks, Beckett, Beckett, Brecht and Brecht, to think only of the 19th, hardly measure up, do they? Narrow, eclectic, didactic, political, even.

Shaffer, on the other hand, goes for the big theme, or has, at least since he became a Big Playwright.

Real *Heart of the Sun*, *Equus*, and now *Amadeus* all made maximum use of the theatre's resources, and concerned themselves in various ways with the contrast between the savage and the civilized, Deism and Apollonian, God and Man, sacred and profane.

Big subjects, they certainly are. Big success too.

Amadeus, as everyone knows by now, features a battle between the divine Mozart, and the worldly Salieri over two things. Firstly the injustice of God assigning Mozart such sublime talents but putting them in such a foul idiom, Jewish body, and not allowing Salieri to be more human also (as a forgotten Court bureaucrat). Secondly, Salieri's attempt at immortality through the killing of, or creating the conditions for the death of, Mozart, and therefore God.

Mozart and God win because no one believes that Salieri in his noble ravings did kill Mozart, and because mortally Salieri was still only forgotten but admitted by Mozart's genius.

One could write about the philosophical implications of Shaffer's paradoxes for pages. Suffice it to say here that he has created a neat, theatrically satisfying plot, where the bad guy might indeed kill the hero, but gets his comeuppance. Rewards

lies in Salieri's ultimate inability to achieve immortality as an assassin.

And the audience participates in learning (like those Disney Lives of the Romanovs) *Composers* more about Mozart and Salieri, than they know before.

Hardly anyone knows of Salieri, so profound has been his oblivion, or suspected that the divine Mozart was such a fooling.

The detective story, the contrasts, the mastering of his of Mozart's music, the extremely good opportunities for the actors playing Salieri and Mozart (in this MTC production opportunities grasped and achieved by Frederick Panlow and Bruce Myles), the relative simplicity of the staging, and the occasional perfection where God speaks as Salieri, ought to make for a totally satisfying evening.

It doesn't. Shaffer is too glib, too neat and too symmetrical to be totally convincing.

His plays are about people who go in to the Dionysian, or who would like to. Mozart is portrayed as being in the hands of God, God's instrument, the creator of profound music with the all too human body. The problem is that Shaffer's portrayal of him stems from the opposite sort of artistic style. The tight, neat, clean, symmetrical, argumentative, Apollonian. Shaffer's plays come from the head not the heart, don't have the full-blooded commitment to the mythical in humans to entirely win over and move an audience or the profound arguments to convince them.

Sad, you have to give him his due. *Amadeus* isn't boring, it tells you things you didn't know before, reminds you to buy some more Mozart, and offers the MTC an excellent production.

Apart from a few audio problems on opening night, John Sumner's direction is nicely paced, uses all opportunities for the proper effects, and gets full blast performances from Panlow and Myles, and a nicely simple, evocative design from Anne French.

Much smaller in scale is Clive Gorman's *A Night in the Arms of Raelen*. In this play, ex-hedge, now headler Mory has a reunion with ex-gang members Ray, Bronx and the leader of the pack, the Kings Cross Yank. Mory's married now, the daughter's left and there's trouble with his wife, Raelen, aka The Painted Doll, formerly beloved by all the gang.

Mory's not so much trying to recapture the gang as reassure himself that they did indeed have a good time, the best time of

their lives. Along the way he does little experiments with the logic of the day as a way of recalling specific exciting events and reinforcing a hopeful kinship with his fellow gang members 20 years on.

Of course it doesn't really work.

Blat and Horst frequently deny any knowledge of the things Mory remembers and accuse him of not being there at the night of events they remember. It's clear that Mory was an earnest hanger-on, not at the centre. Then, as now.

Neither Blat nor Horst have made anything much of their lives, but retain a certain aggressive, firmness presence. Blat especially. He has a great range of mannerisms, tics and jokes, indicating that perhaps he hasn't grown up at all that far.

They're all waiting for the appearance of the legendary Yank. When he comes he's not what they expected. Not only does he claim he's been Born Again but he has an investment proposition. Turns out he's a not very successful con man, not the charismatic they remember.

One thing everyone present has in common is a memory of their last night as a gang, when there was a fight at Radston's flat, and some laughs and some rain. No one can remember what really happened, except for Radston, perhaps. This was the night she and Mory finally got together.

If that last night caused the gang to break up then their recollection of it does it again. It causes Radston to tell each of them what she thinks and knows of them, and it's hardly flattering. Her discussion of all the men is especially poignant because they'll all leave her behind, in a fashion. She would have followed the Yank anywhere he'd given her to Blat and Rat, and Mory won her on the last night, accidentally.

Radston remembers what it was really like when the gang was together, and what it's like now. Twenty years later she's leaving Mory to sort things out.

There's a wealth of detail in the play, and a wonderfully detailed subtle characterisation from Ross Chaffin as Rat, but overall perhaps there's too much in it.

Too many themes, too much plot so that ideas aren't really taken up in depth. There's the language, the idea of recalling past happy times, the individual characters, the relationship between the men, the historical and The Passion Doll, notions about comradeship, comradeship, sexuality, growing up. It's all there, but too much is there.

There are also some structural problems. The revelation of each character's

relationship with Radston is revealed at a specific subchapter, which to me was a little clumsy. And Radston's cleaning up of everyone in turn at the end of the play was as well.

The play does evoke some of the emotions of lost youth, a golden era which wasn't lost perhaps because of the canonical nature of the people in the play, it didn't stimulate much sympathy or wistful remembrance for me.

Entertaining political theatre GENERAL MACARTHUR NOT DROWNING MOTHER'S COURAGE

General MacArthur Not Drowning All Out Ensemble, All Playhouse Theatre, Melbourne, Melbourne, Vic. Opened October 20, 1991

Director: Richard Baskin, script adapted by Patrick Cook, music design: Robert Dean, music composed by John Morton, puppet maker: Ross Hill, Cost General Douglas MacArthur: John Black, Nuts towar: Australian soldier: Ross Browning, General MacArthur's son: Peter Smith, Mother of General Black: Benjamin Franklin. (Professional)

Not Drowning All Out Ensemble, All Play Theatre, Melbourne, Vic. Opened October 21, 1991

Cost: Wife Drowning by: John Black, Making Up by: Frances Kane & Diana Fox, Director: Designer: Nicholas Turner, Sound: Derek Kewell.

Cost: Wife Drowning, Peter Clarke

Mother's Courage directed and devised by: Sue Light and Benjamin Franklin, Adelaide, Adelaide, Opened October 14, 1991

Performed by: Sue Light and Benjamin Franklin. (Professional)

The figure and status of General MacArthur have a grotesque, larger than life quality and his assault on Australia is an ideal subject for a puppet play. In *General MacArthur Not Drowning* Roger Pugh has brought together two of his thematic and stylistic preoccupations: the political and ideological effects of the American invasion of Australia and his interest in Japanese theatre forms. To this has been added the rare brilliance of the Australian Matriarch Theatre under the direction of Richard Baskin, and Patrick Cook's cartoon character designs.

The ironical correspondence Pugh draws between MacArthur and the commercial industry of Colonel Sanders is all in better set in Cook's conception of him in his personally commissioned, over-the-top

embellished with the golden eagle, his hawk nose and permanently attached dark glasses, his chest bedecked with freshly stained medals, marching about on short, heavily padded prop's legs. The play is full of witty sophisticated images and highly inventive puppetry, at one point MacArthur, having mistakenly landed at Mt Newman, encounters two Japanese business men who cannot turn him by ritually untying their stomachs from which they produce transistor radios and the odd plastic shark.

While the play utilizes a number of different modes of puppetry, a contracted version of Japanese Bunraku is used for the main characters. In it the puppeteers are in full view of the audience — visibly visible as their Bunko army troops just like the anonymous soldiers in the war games of the real MacArthur. The extraordinarily disembodied relationship of the puppeteer to the puppet is quite intimidating to watch, and the intensity of belief it creates without the distraction of live music is remarkable. Robert Dean's slick scores painted in bold outline and transparent colour, suggestive of Japanese wood-blocks, completed the distinct aesthetic of the production.

Pugh's script explored not only MacArthur's personality, and his role here as an agent ambassador of military and industrial interests, but also raised the question of language and truth. Rhetoric and military double talk was shown to be an extension of MacArthur's inability to correctly name any of the Australian states he visited, and his penchant for renaming Australian cities after those of Texas. This attention to the devaluation of language firmly located the play in the context of contemporary relations between Australia and America.

Not Drowning All Out Ensemble is the third Melbourne production of the Adelaide based All Out Ensemble, and it consisted of two short, one-woman plays. *Cost: Wife Drowning* written by Adelaide writer, Jerry Roubil, explores the suburban entrepreneurship of a middle-class housewife in non-naturalistic, poetic language.

The opening of the piece was rich and suggestive — a room, a kitchen, vividly painted in distorted perspective suspended in space, standing inside a bride doll woman with a veil over her face, with every step she makes the kitchen just perceptibly veils against her, to the side and far outside the kitchen a man half naked, half veiled existed in a clear plastic tube. In a flat, detached voice the woman starts how



to make a shoddylike steak and how to marinate barbecue meat, then she shoves into her vest, rams her arms and legs on invisible strings attached to the ceiling. The kitchen sways menacingly.

Unfortunately the piece unravelled as peak in this opening sequence and the rest became a frustrating repetition of format clichés, which were all but drowned out by the incessant, minimalist sweeping of the

MTA's General Manager in Australia.

Also in Wonderland model kitchen. At some point during this, the man smeared himself in tomato sauce and shaving cream but by then I was too irritated by the creaking to ponder what it meant.

Francis Hane and Daria Fels' monologue about the early morning truck of a working mother, *Waking Up*, proved to be

an important, sustained piece of comic, political writing that was direct and engaging from beginning to end. Nicholas Trueman's direction was as conceptually arresting as in the first play without being as intrusive. The woman stood on a speaker's podium with a microphone, beside her a colour television set was on, with the sound turned down and a man's jacket draped across it, however the effect of a domestic Nuremberg rally was somewhat undercut by the light of the much shoddy set from the last piece. Peggy Wallace's performance in *Waking Up* was subtle, clearly felt, tight and unmanipulated qualities which were obscured in the first piece.

Mother's Courage is Sue Ingleson's post-natal sequel to *From Free to Mothers* performed at The Comedy Cafe earlier this year. In it Ingleson deconstructed the grotesque comic figure of Bill Ruelings, the pregnant man led astray by a thoughtless woman and abandoned to the brusque plastic gloved hands of a female "gynecologist". Five months later Bill has returned, the period has embattled parents of a howling baby daughter.

He struggled onto the happy and stage of *The Human Lounge*, weighed down with bouffanties, bouffants and those queer quieted bags that new mothers inevitably carry. Round his neck was a plastic ladder, and a cloth contraption of Acoustic organs designed to use a baby to its mother dangled down his back, perhaps not a happy man but decidedly wiser. Like a soldier returned from Gallipoli his story must be told — he has suffered the indignities of the strap, the electric coarseness, and the spontaneity performed with pecking shears.

Lactose poisoning has affected his once sharp mind — he has trouble getting on of his pyjamas in the morning, and has been unable to resist signing his life away to Vival Gym in a pathetic attempt to retrieve his figure. In the supermarket "the parent companies" Hane, Nettle and Johnson and Johnson bombard him with products he can barely afford and never dispose of. What promised to be "a supreme peak experience" has turned as sour as his milk did when Collingwood lost.

Was it all worthwhile? Photographs don't lie and we are treated to a full album of slakes, vodka, pills, barely beautiful, difficult, unimaginable, revolt, hilarious. Ingleson again proves that she is a virtuoso comedienne who can make political theatre greatly entertaining.

Informal entertainment UPSIDE DOWN LITERARY LUNACIES RICHARD STILGOE

by Margot Luke

Upside Down at the Bottom of the World by David Allen. Melbourne: The Bell. 1981. Pp. 80. \$10.00. Opened October 8, 1981.

Director: Mark Billingham, Designer: Jill Halliday, Stage Manager: Helen Lushko, Cost Laurence Frank Johnson, Props: Denise Young, Jack: Dennis Clements, Annie: Adria Piper (Production)

Editors: Jennifer Holmes for Bell, Designer: Ken Campbell for Bell, Cost: Anne Davis, Lines: Hildegarde, Ivan King (Production)

Upside Down at the Bottom of the World is a lovely, paradoxical, enigmatic look at D H Lawrence: in particular at the loving battle that was his marriage with the perspective of his short story in *Animate*.

Playwright David Allen integrates the two themes by presenting the story of Lawrence and Frieda in flashback, set into the present concerns with their exponents in Australia, especially their neighbours Jack and Victoria. Readers of *Animate* will recognise much of the situation. Jack is the beloved enemy, physically arrogant, strong and simple with a sort of fatal fatal attraction, which points up all of Lawrence's vulnerabilities.

The author hovers uneasily between the generally accepted picture of the "real" Lawrence and his own interest in exploring the confrontation between Jack, the honest classless Aussie primitive, and Lawrence, the romantic poet, boy intellectual, deteriorated by now, not to mention his aristocratic skin of a wife.

This kind of "biographical" play works rather like pure sensation. The point is the reference point rather than the thing itself, just as here the biographical facts are pegs on which to hang preoccupations (Shaffer's *Amadeus* might be seen as an extreme case of this treatment).

Mark Billingham as guest director for the Bell in-the-Wall series, with the performers he draws from the actors, notably Frank Johnson as the central character, though audiences sitting in the front row of this small, intimate theatre have expressed irritation at being prolonged close-ups of full frontal (and back) nudity than they felt the play



Adria Piper, as Annie, in Upside Down

demanding theatrical real in demonstrating fearlessly tackled challenges or merely modest exhibitionism and wonders?

There are other usual lapses. The backdrop, intended to suggest an unlimited expanse of ocean, seems glibly, rather than bary, whilst Frieda as played by Denise Young manages to be dynamic, and funny despite the underhanded chum padding and censoring which make her appear like a cold on heat. No more feat of acting triumphing over unnecessary handicaps. Her German accent, too, is skilfully underplayed.

Dennis Clements as Jack displays impressive flexibility in suggesting the contradictory elements of the character whilst Adria Piper provides a contrast of unmitigated goodness, creating scenes without appearing staged at the same time.

I attended a preview, but later enquiries revealed that both the strengths and weaknesses of the production remained essentially the same.

By way of contrast, the same theatre

offers a Last Show created *Forever Forevers*, a literary revue put together by Ken Campbell-Dalbee. It's pop, and mainly funny with material ranging from Thackeray to snippets of current TV, though occurring names are Bruce Dawe, Roger McGough and Judith Wright. Jenny Davis, Glenn Haycock and Ivan King sang through music, recitations and inspired horsplay — setting out to entertain and succeeding.

Informal entertainment has been the key note this month, with the Cambridge University Footlights Revue following *Forever Forevers* at the Regal.

Added to this feast of comedy at the Octagon was the unique Richard Stilgoe, who occasionally, by electronic manipulation, manages to suggest there are twenty-seven of him. He had just arrived in Perth from a worldwide Police Congress in Melbourne (thousands of policemen) but he seemed confused as to the theme: popping, perforated shapes — very bewildering.

Topical songs were introduced, starting off with one written only hours before the show. "Dreamlands are Angli's New Friend", not to mention a poem about the chain of fast-food outlets starting not only our indignities but also Aussie wildlife.

There were the usual inspired anagrams. Stilgoe can conjure up most of the world's leaders out of his own name, or alternatively sing the changes. Maggie Thatcher turns into That Green BBC Hag.

There is the manual improvisation (or cheating, a piece from a note sequence randomly called out by the audience) and after intervals a song that goes with a again building up on audience suggestions, in this case involving such oddly assembled elements as Black Hole, wet luggage, Ian Buchanan, Denise Davis, conspiracy and megalomaniac perils.

A manual comic, who can think on his feet is rare enough, but Stilgoe has enough talent to suggest a whole assembly of new turns. His send-up of country and western style could cause him to be at the Grand Ole Opry, his answer songs of the Transplant Squad and Conscience Foods surpass Tom Lehrer, with the help of a tape-recorder he becomes the King of Songs, and also a 27 man choir whilst his British song written to Persepolis Young Contest specifications, will probably win if it's entered.

Intelligent and funny as the new material is, it's the "classics" that really deserve the greatest praise, and that formidable croaking lady, Lilian Thompson, was certainly kept for one of the croakers.

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THEATRE *guide*

ACT

AMU ARTS CENTRE (494787)

Old King Cole by Ken Campbell, director. Graeme Grosman. A Jigsaw Production. Dec 11-16

CANBERRA THEATRE (497600)

Antony, director. Terence Clarke, musical director. Colin Pascher. The Canberra Theatre Trust's summer season of the musical based on Little Orphan Annie. Jan 7-23

BRINDALE CENTRE (331120)

Naz. The raunchy satires musical, produced by Ron Verburgel for Tempo Theatre. Dec 10-31

PLAYHOUSE (494466)

The Red Pigeon. A pre-Christmas attraction presented by Kaleidoscope Dec 1-5

THE PUNCHINELLO THEATRE

Presenting a new children's show in a tent. Director. Domenico Mico. Dec 4

THEATRE THREE (474222)

Ready River by Dick Diamond. An Australian folk musical featuring the White Cockatoo Band. Produced by Pamela Rosenberg for Canberra Repertory. Wed-Sat to Dec 17. For an info contact Janet Hesley on 494789

NSW

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (9299877)

Three written by Mike Barnes, director. Brian Young, designer. Tom Bannerman. A new Australian comedy about the most famous or infamous day in our history — the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Throughout Dec and Jan

Ensemble Festival of Playwrights 1992

Phillip Street Theatre. Indian Summer by Justin Fleming. Jan 5-9. *Concordia* by John Strupke. Jan 12-16. *I've Come About The Sunset* by Craig Green. Jan 19-23. *The Right Man* by Ron Ross. Jan 26-30

FRANK STRAIN'S BULL N' BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (35074627)

From Hollywood to Hollywood, director. Frank Strain, musical director. Julie Symonds. Throughout Dec and Jan

GENESIA THEATRE (6062828)

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde, director. Dennis Allen. Starts Dec 5

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY (333817)

Stables Theatre. Cheap Thrills by Grand Fasser, designer. Jack Ritchie. Starts Jan 8

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY, Newcastle (049/262756)

Fanny's Theatre Restaurant (262465). *Harriet Crave*. Throughout Dec. *Pippin's Restaurant* (249311). *Yule Play It Again*. Throughout Dec. A variety tour of the Mtn Mt Heights Housing Estate. CWA Dramatic Society's murder mystery *Murder at Checkmate Manor*, director. Anne Neeme. A send up of amateur theatricals

KIRRIBILLIPUD THEATRE (921415)

The Private Eye Show by Perry Quinlan and Paul Coubil with Zoe Quinlan. Into January

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (4903164)

Once Upon A Mattress, music by Mary Rodgers, lyrics by Marshall Barr and Dean Fuller, director. John Wilson. Based on the fairy tale of the princess and the pea. To Dec 19

The Bee and the Butterfly by Wendy Blackland, director. Audrey Blackland, designer. Deirdre Burgess. For young children. Jan 3-9

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (9776585)

Pardon Our Privates, director. Peggy Mortimer, with Ron Fraser. Throughout Dec and Jan

NEW THEATRE (5193403)

On The Wabsey by Nick Knight, director. Frank Barnes. Nick Knight's very successful documentary musical on the depression years in SA. To mid Dec. *Flying Blind* by Bill Morrison. Starts early Jan

NIMROD THEATRE (6966003)

Upstairs. Tales From the Vienna Woods by Oskar von Horvath, translated by Christopher Hamilton, director. Aubrey Mallor, with Cathy Downes, Michele Fawdon, Barry Otto, Deirdre Rubenstein, Anna Volokas and John Walton. Into January. *Welcome The Bright World* by Stephen Sewell, director. Neil Arnfield. Starts Jan 27. *Downstairs. Eyes Of The Wives* by Tony Sprague, director. Neil Arnfield. To Dec 6. *Desert Flame A Women and Theatre Project*, director. Chrissie Koller, with Valerie Bader, Beverly Blankenship, Suzanne

Dudley. Gillian Hyde, Jenny Hope, Deborah Kennedy, Chrissie Koller, Jenny Ludlam and Sarah de Jong. Dec 16 to Jan 17

NSW THEATRE FOR THE DEAF (3571260)

Theodore for primary schools and *The Unheard World of Jasper Lawson* for secondary schools, directors, Ian

Watson and Nola Colefax. To mid Dec. Public performances at Union Theatre. Sydney University start and Jan

O'MALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (333817)

Stables Theatre: The Best of Sports, a season of three one act plays, with Terry Badier, John Hannon, Robert Hughes, Mel Gibson, Elizabeth Alexander. Sindy Gore and Elizabeth Chance. Throughout Dec

PHILLIP STREET THEATRE (3328576)

Finetime by Roger Hall, director, Peter Williams, with John Clayton, Ken Goldby, Gordon Glenwright, Lyn Collingwood, Les Amussen, Guy Malcolm and Paul Smith. To Dec 29

O THEATRE (047/357384)

On Our Selection by Steele Rudd

Orange Civic Centre to Dec 5

SEYMOUR CENTRE (6909555)

Sydney Festival productions. *York Theatre*. London Theatre Group production of *The Fall of The House of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe and *The Tell Tale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe. Jan 13-30

Sacred Theatre: The Black Theatre of Prague's production of A Week of Opents created by Jan Smeek. Jan 19-30

Downstairs. Mogood Boys devised by Ray Henwood, with Ray Henwood. Jan 2-11. Melbourne Theatre Company production of *Beecham* by Carol Brahm and Ned Sherrin. Jan 14-30

Between Earth and Sky an original musical, director. Melvyn Morrow. To Jan 3. *Like Night Show On The Street*, musical entertainment, director. Lisa Peers. To Jan 3

SHORTPORT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (5803946)

Workshop include puppetry, design, radio and video. Dec 28 to end Jan

An Oase playbait by cast, director, Michael Webb. Dec 4, 5, 11 and 12

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (20588)

Drama Theatre SOH. *Christie* by Robert David MacDonald, director, Rodney Fisher, designer. Brian Thomson, with Peter Garfield, Neil Fitzpatrick, Peter Cousins, Jane Harders, Jennifer Hagen, Linda Cropper. Robert van Mackelenberg, Matthew O'Sullivan, Frank Garfield and Scott Higgins. The life and art of

Diaghilev/Nijinsky et al. *You Can't Take It With You* by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, director, George Ogilvie, designers. Kristian Fredriksson and Anna French, with Tyler Cogan, John Fawcay, Jane Harders, Jim Kemp, Margot Lee, Tim McKenzie, Carol Rye and Geoffrey Rush. Starts Jan 2

THEATRE ROYAL (02310111)
The Rocky Horror Show by Richard O'Brien, director, David Togan, designer, Brian Thomson, with Daniel Ainslie and Stuart Westcott. To Dec 23. Chicago by Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse, director, Richard Wherrett musical director, Peter Casey, with Nancye Hayes, Geraldine Turner, Terence Donovan, Judi Connell, George Spentis and JP Webster. Return of the smash-hit musical about corruption and media hype in the thirties. Starts Dec 31. For entries contact Carole Long on 0650010, 0371200.

NT

GARWIN THEATRE GROUP (015522)
You're A Good Man Charlie Brown by Charles M. Schulz, director, Tony Soszynski. To Dec 12. For entries contact Philippe Morris on 015522

QLD

ARTS THEATRE (362344)
Behind The Arts, director, Ken McCaffrey. Collectively scripted revue. To Dec 19.
The Wayward Way by Bill Howe and Lorne Huxley, director, Sandra Hines. Musical melodrama adaptation of *The Drunkard*. Dec 31 to Jan 30.
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (0217777)
 Anne QTC's highly successful production returns to the capital after a state tour. To Dec 12.

LA BOITE THEATRE (361622)
The London Blitz Show by Frank Hatherley, director, Robert Kingham. Fun and games and the odd song or two during the Blitz. To Dec 19.
The Queensland Game devised and directed by Sean Mee with Terry Phelan and Kim Lynch. Rese style collection of anecdotes and sketches of Queensland country life. Dec 30 to Jan 15.

THE TN COMPANY (3625133)
 Woodward Theatre, Kelvin Grove, *Mother Courage and Her Children* by Bertolt Brecht, director, Bryan Nason,

with Jennifer Blockidge and Judith Anderson. Tragic loss and the business ethic in war torn Europe. To Dec 5.
 For entries contact Jeremy Ridgeman on 0772519

SA

THE ACTING COMPANY (2740281)
Space Movers by Nick Gill, director, Sue Rider. Two children are taken on an intergalactical voyage by the Space Movers. To Dec 18.

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL CENTRE TRUST (510131)
 Festival Theatre, Festival Centre. *Services* by Mark Bramble. Michael Stewart and Cy Coleman, director and choreographer, Bessyork Lee, musical director, Noel Smith. With Reg Livermore. Musical extravaganza on the life of the greatest showman. Starts Jan 13.

Q THEATRE (2235451)
The Fantasticks by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt, director, Peter Goers. The longest running musical in American history. To Dec 12.
THE STAGE COMPANY (2236282)
The Space, Festival Centre, Sandy Lee. *Live at New Dal* by Rob George, director, John Noble. An Australian Country and Western singer on a tour of Vietnam, interwoven with an examination of attitudes to the war. To Dec 12.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY (515151)
 Playhouse Theatre. *Festival Centre The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, director, George Whaley, with Marilyn Allen, Peter Cummins, Vanessa Downing, John Gregg, Robert Grubb, Joanne Lewis and Deborah Little. Brecht's most popular musical set in backstreet London. To Dec 5.
 Price Theatre, Centre for the Performing Arts. *The Sad Songs of Anna Sando* by Darren Clarke, director, Margaret Davis, with Isobel Kins, Stuart McCreery, Jacqy Phillips and Christine Woodland. The new play about two women who seek refuge in a women's shelter questions the effectiveness of the helping professions. To Dec 5.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (519121)
 Festival Theatre, Festival Centre. *Chicago* by Fred Ebb, Bob Fosse and John Kander, director, Richard Wherrett. Musical director, Peter

Casey, designer, Brian Thomson, with Nancye Hayes, Geraldine Turner, Terence Donovan and Judi Connell. Smash-hit musical about corruption and media hype in the thirties. To Dec 2.
TROUPE THEATRE (2717552)
 Curtis, Kelso Johnson and Ward, with Lance Curtis, Geoff Kelso, Dan Johnson and Al Ward. A fresh dose of manic cabaret from this renowned comic group. January, season to be announced.
 For entries contact The Association of Community Theatres on 2675555

VIC

AUSTRALIAN NOUVEAU THEATRE (0403253)

Anthill Downland. *Sculpture Exhibition* by Lorella Quen. *Fantastic*, bizarre, surreal additions to the normal. Throughout Dec.
 Fourth Annual Festival of Screamheads. A non-declinaire, non-dogmatic non-stop celebration of the spirit of surrealism. Dec 12 and 13. *Upstairs The Prodigal Bird* by Chris Dickens. To Dec 5. *Deane* an adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *A Street Car Named Desire*. Both plays presented by Artisan Moving Theatre Company in a debut season of modern mime plays. Dec 8-19.
 Children's Shows. *Downstairs*, Jenny Makore and the Mine O'Clock Tiger by Handspan Theatre Company. Monies 1.30pm. Dec 7-11. *Beauty*. Collaborations by Handspan Theatre Company. Dec 9-11. *DM The Bealer*. Trick devised, designed and manipulated by French puppeteer Monique Bernard. To Dec 12.
 Late Shows, Fridays. *Pour en Finir Avec Le Jugement de Dieu* by French director, Jean-Pierre Mignot. Second part of *Artaud and Cruelly*, in French. No knowledge of the French language required, "au contraire".
 Play Reading. *The Death of Willy* by Frank McCone. Dec 20.
ARENA THEATRE (3401937)
Anti Ya Say Ya Love Me devised by the Maggie TIE Team for senior secondary students, director, Peter Charlton. To Dec 4.
Tales in "in schools" dance performance devised and performed by Jackie Miggles. Robin McIntosh and Mark Gorton. To Dec 17. Youth Theatre and Dance Workshops also. Adult Drama and Dance workshops on weeknights and weekends through Dec and Jan.

ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA (039433325)

You're a Good Man Charlie Brown.
The Ensemble Theatre. Touring Yid country.
**BAMANA LOUNGE COMEDY ROOM
BYO (4193888)**

The New Comedy Show, with Rod Quintlock, Mary Kennesally, Geoff Brooks and Steven Blackburn
Throughout Dec and early Jan. Tues-Sat, 8pm

COMEDY CAFE BYO THEATRE RESTAURANTS (4193866)

Comical Knowledge by Hieronymus Bosch.
Melbourne's newest comedy ensemble. This production explores the circus of male and female behaviour. Throughout Dec and early Jan. Tues-Sat, 8pm

HANDSPAN THEATRE COMPANY (419978)

Kid's Theatre Festival at Rosie's Coffee Shop. Rosebud. Programme presented by Handspan Theatre Company and The Kooka Puppet Company.
Jenny Malone and the Nose D'Clock Tiger

The Banquo of Berkeley's Creek
Beatty Combinations

The Banquo's Secret Treasure and
Switch Over. Jan 10-24

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (4633211)

They're Playing Our Song by Neil Simon and Martin Hamlisch. Starring Jacki Weaver and John Waters.
Popular two handed musical comedy. Throughout Dec and Jan.

LA MAMA (3476585)

In The Dark sound and film by Chris Knowles. Dec 3-6

Taking Over a performance devised by Lloyd Jones. Dec 11-13

The Brahmin's Dream with Annette Milon, Rayes Oviat, Philip Zachariah, Russell Deable and Kathy Strabindas. Dec 13-16

The Promise of Film Making. The Second journey to Yviro performance by Arthur and Connie Claret. Dec 18, 19 and 20

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (4195225)

Foreground Snap devised and directed by Terry O'Connell, with Mark Conway. To Dec 31. *The International Comedy Festival* with The Brass Band (USA) and Josh Paul Bell (Sydney). Starts Jan 11

La Joke (4195225) (See upstairs at the Last Laugh)

Anything Happened On The Way To Christmas A Christmas line-up of top young comic talent. Compere Jason Clifton and featuring Les Thos, Ringbarus, Geoff Kelso, Tobi Hines, Simon Thorpe, Sue Ingleton and The Bagels. Throughout Dec.
**MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY
(4544600)**

Athenaeum Theatre: A Cuckoo In The Nest by Ben Travers. One of the famous Aldeyech farces which delighted the jazz garden flappers and bright young things of the twenties. Director, Simon Chivers, designer, Paul Kahner. Throughout Dec and Jan

Russell Street Theatre: Frankly Thru
Frank's talents as a raconteur are legendary and his memory is a treasure of theatrical lore and tales of the famous. Director, John Sumner. To Jan 30

Athenaeum 2: Beachfront by Caryl Brinkman and Ned Sherrin, director, Ron Rodger. A return season to Jan 9

Narrow Feet by David Knight: directed and designed by Bruce Miles. Starts Jan 13

MILL THEATRE COMPANY (032-223218)

Regular workshops for special interest groups including Gossiping Prison, handicapped, disabled and unemployed groups. To early Dec. Mid night for everyone. Thurs 7-9pm. Mid Club for children Sat 9-10am. To Dec 17

MUSHROOM TROUPE (2417133)

Savage Love, director, Alison Richards, with Neil Giles and Faye Bandrup. A comic book cabaret of Ice Age Rock. To Dec 20

PLAYBOX THEATRE COMPANY (034888)

81 Martins at the Playbox with 3 shows

Downstairs. When Liza Colville by Michael Mitchenner. director, Helmut Bakker. with Gita Riles as its Butchess. To Dec 6
Upstairs: *The Flat A Temporary Thing* by Andrew MacPherson, director, Michael Mitchenner. Dec 6-20
Playbox Children's Shows. *Sinbad The Sailor*, director, Rodney Fisher. Mon to Sat. 11am and 1pm. Jan 4-29



Mr. Wilson at SHORE'S

UNIVERSAL THEATRE (4193777)

Squirt a political revue by Barry Oakley, David Williamson, John Rosen, Steven Sewell, Patrick Cook, Tim Robertson, David Allen and Steve Vizard, with Max Gillies. Looks at the games played in the world of power politics in general, and The Liberal Party in particular. Hopefully throughout Dec — watch the newspapers.

Childrens Matinees and Concerts throughout Jan

For further contact Contact Fraser on 8618448

WA

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TIME (CATS) (3285473)

Rhymes and Chimes for children aged 5 to 8 years. Starts Dec 1. School time performances and two public performances at 30 Museum St. Dec 16, 17

DOLPHIN THEATRE (3602440)

University Dramatic Society's *Murder of Or*. Jan 11-30

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (3216286)

The National Theatre Company present *Amis*, director, Stephen Barry, with Edgar Melcott and Jill Perryman. Starts Dec 1. *Mason Miller* present. *Servant of Two Masters*. Starts Jan 7

THE HOLE IN THE WALL (3812493)

Court Warring. An over-the-top, risible and riotous Christmas revue celebrating every institution from marriage to matriarchy. Throughout Dec to Jan 2

MASON MILLER

Treasure Island an exciting experience for children — performed on an island in the Swan River at Maylands

PERTH CONCERT HALL

CATS. Cats and Hats on the terraces and loggias of Concert Hall — mime, puppets, and plays. Jan 25-29. For 5 to 10 year olds and parents of all ages 10-00am — 2-00pm

UNIVERSITY THEATRES (3803244)

Surfman Gardens. CATS Present. Martin a family picnic fun feast at 6-30pm. Jan 13-17 and 20-24. For further contact Margaret Schwan on 3411778

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There are many advantages in having an American Express Card.

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FILM info

LAWRENCE FILM JUMPS
KANGAROO

LAWRENCE FORD
KANGAROO

While *Amos*, the film which David Rose, Tom Berenger and Frost have, were impressively producing, shooting, and writing, had to go into recess for a while another film, unproduced, relating to D.H. Lawrence, will open at the end of January. This is *Portrait of a Lady* which deals with some fairly sensational episodes in Lawrence's life. Ian McKellen plays the writer, with Ava Gardner, Janet Suzman and Penelope Keith as other notable ladies and John Gielgud as a sort of chief nurse.

APOLOGIES TO ELLICK

APOLOGIES TO ELLERRE
Richard Driehaus, co-president of Sarnack, tells me I was totally wrong when I wrote that David Lick, his partner, was depicted in the picture as the villain. He says there is often as he wanted to be and there was no tension between the producers and Lick himself. A film directed by Sarnack. Survival is scheduled for release in March, 1982.

A PINCH OF POISON
...entertaining, but he used all
...the way at 11

A PINCH OF POISON
 Anne's understudy, the beautiful blonde who played Miranda in *Focus* at Haring Hall, and left not long after to try her luck in Montreal has landed the role of Luciana in *MMT*. To someone's worse, the singer, Mark Strawn, is the director. A writer in the *London Times* says not much is known of Luciana, but on the whole he doesn't think she's actually intended to be a bad girl, but was forced to become a prostitute by her family. Some kind of big fish in the Luciana

the Veterans Congress. Her first efforts, at 11
in Madison, was for a soft drink
competition.

STEPPING OUT

STEPPING OUT

Chris Norman's documentary 'Support Our Star' has just picked up another award having been chosen by UNESCO to present the official closing ceremony to be held in Paris in December. It has won the international prize for best film documentary at the 1982 Australian Film Awards and has been sold to television in 15 countries. But not, as I write, in Australia. TV. The film's US distributor is looking for an Academy Award nomination in 1983.

1982

THE CROP FOR 1984

THE CROP FOR 1984

It all goes well, there are some of the Glen view may be in 1984. The Australian Film Commission has opened funds for script and production development. The head honcho of Motion Picture from Western Agency, former MNC producer specializing in action programmed London from Michael Katz, Tony R. Rayment from Frank Marchand and Stephen Kerkorian; Arnold Wolf Associates; R. J. Cooper from Arnold Greenblatt, Inc. With Wright Jones from Michael Katz, Arnold at Andrew Spivak from Robert Kerkorian, and Jackson Spivak from Michael Thompson.

It seems of the value don't actually seem you are, otherwise that they will probably be changed before actual shooting.

Area	Location	Plant	Barrel	Foot
...

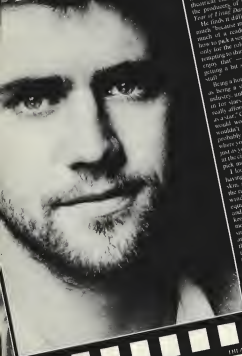
100

Contributing Editor:
Elizabeth Riddell



In interview with FIZABE L...

EL GIBSON: VERY HOT PROPERTY



feature

Mel Gibson, a very hot property since his two *Mad Max* and *Lethal Weapon* was born in America and although resident in Australia for 12 years still has the USA passport which may be useful if he accepts any of the offers coming in from his native land. So far, none of these has reached him yet. He can be observed lately with a bundle of scripts under his arm as he goes in between his home, the offices of his agent, Bill Muratich, veteran theatrical entrepreneur and talks with the producers of his next film, *The Year of Living Dangerously*.

He finds it difficult to cope with so much "business in normal life. I'm not much of a reader. But I'm learning how to pick a script that will work, not only for the role offered to me — it's tempting to think that's great. I would enjoy that — but as a film I am getting a bit sharper at that kind of stuff."

Being a hot property is not the same as being a star. The Australian film industry, unlike television, does not go in for stars, partly because it cannot really afford them. "I don't see myself as a star," Gibson says. "I don't think I would work. I'm too anonymous. I wouldn't be recognised in the street, where you find more women than men just as you find more women than men at the cinema. Look at me. Who would pick me out?"

I looked at him — compact build, having lost the childlike of *Top Gun* stars, regular features, a small scar on the right cheek, dark thick hair, thick, wellbroken, jeans, track shoes, equipped with a packet of cigarettes and two boxes of matches which he keeps working and unworking, so moving cigarette from packet but not working it, instead dumping it loudly and theatrically on the desk to pack the tobacco together — a gesture I thought was used only by somebody's uncle — with lots of other quick movements of arms and hands, all of them seeming to express not so much tension as not quite controlled energy.

But I think most people would identify the face and the grey eyes, in as it been behind and watched, if they had ever seen him in a film.

THE AGE, AUSTRALIA, 15 DECEMBER 1991

Wrong Side of the Road

by Elisabeth Risdell

Apart from its entertainment value, which is considerable, *The Wrong Side of the Road* is a model for independent film makers who have something to say but suffer from an inability to say it without preaching. Audiences, even those who get tired of sermons. The producers, Ned Landor and Clarence Isaac, and the director, Ned Landor, have made a fascinatingly true and enormously careful film out of a couple of days in the lives of two black bands, the Oh No's and No. Front Address, during which they themselves imitate the life style of the participants.

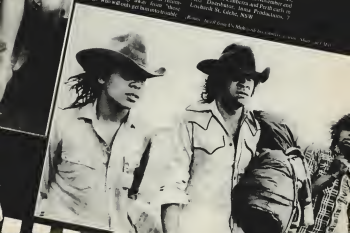
They work out of Port Adelaide up to Port Pirie in a truck and a car, interrupted on the road by police, checked by a hotel all ages in the local community hall, (what?) arrested in Adelaide twice because of the boisterous, unbecoming hospitality of the black, playing poker, brooding, sitting out and getting backed out. They play dominoes and go with the music. One is white enough to appear to have a policeman reconstructed that he stop at a drug "house" where all ends get from into trouble.

In other words they are playing themselves, on the road. The singer, Clarence Isaac, told his dear old dad and brother to come again, too, turned in, where better parents and they be successful. They sleep out in a bushy bush and one of three children's names repeated three times, and picks up a fat of cash.

The film was nominated for the Australian Film Institute Awards for best film and best original music score. What a look is it. You do not have to make allowances for it. It was made on the small of a road tag but has more of the something lack of professionalism than high spirit.

Ned Landor, who made the extraordinary interesting short documentaries *Lawless* and *Lawless*, Clarence Isaac, who worked with Cows On the API and at the Center for Aboriginal Studies in Melbourne and Adelaide in November and 1982. Distribution, Janus Productions, 7 Leichhardt St, Leichhardt, NSW.

Review: David Greig, The Melbourne Independent, 11 March 1983



Indispensable tool of the trade

by Elizabeth Hubbard

It would be a shame to say that the *Illustrated Motion Picture Year Book*, edited by Peter Biskind of *Screen Papers*, is 1992's tool of the trade that nobody connected with the industry — producers, directors, performers, execs, distributors, salesmen, film accountants and lawyers and virtually crones — should be without. And I wouldn't. As it turns out, the book is a handsome volume, easy to handle and read, proceeds laid out in a refreshingly well-illustrated

It can, of course, only be as good as the information it gathers, and as the plans of the exec and script gung slugging industry make those plans, there are a few patterns but not many.

A roundup of the comments but will give you an idea of the kind of ground the book covers. Part one is headed Film Industry Roundup, and it is just that: a readable collection of various snippets taken in such accounts of the local world as production, distribution, and the film industry, film education, film festivals, awards and competitions, censorship, newspaper and magazine criticism of the local product, in Australia and overseas, censorship, technology, investment and even obituaries.

Part two is a record of feature films in 1991 and 1992, part three presents profiles of such significant figures as Bruce Beresford, Matt Carroll of the S.A. Film Corporation, David Williamson the playwright and now screen play writer, and many more film producers, directors, scriptwriters, cinematographers, editors, technical people and executives, with their resumes.

Part five is a directory of every organization and supplier and technical staff in the business, part six has 16 pages on the media and part seven is a reference section that takes us everything the other departments have missed. Cross-checking is easy and the whole thing is a delight to the eye.

Peter Biskind's associate editors were Ross Lussell and Susan Murray, associate editors were Murray Perle and John McEwen and the book was designed by Leah Robertson. The NSW Government wanted financially in its publication, and NSW researchers were Lyn Quigley, Carol Hughes and Amanda Barnard, formerly with the Sydney Film Festival. Researchers in other states were Eva Schramm, John Beck, Debbie Cole, David Manning, Jennifer Schone and Robert Handcock.

guide

WATCH FOR THESE . . .
A short list of films of more than usual interest, currently showing around Australia . . .

THE FRENCH LIEUTENANTS' WOMAN, is revealing to look at, has Meryl Streep made to order for the Oscars however, a first upstanding new male star in Jeremy Irons, and a subplot written by Harold Pinter in case an audience feels smothered in romanticism. Watch for it to sweep the Oscar board.

ATLANTIC CITY, is a remarkable film made by the French director Louis Malle (*Pretty Baby*) in Affleck with Burt Lancaster, who always works well with European directors. Susan Sarandon and wonderfully wicked Kate Winslet as a gangster's widow washed up in *Atlantic City*. It is suspenseful, tough, romantic and often very funny.

CHARIOTS OF FIRE I have to remind you about *Chariots of Fire* because it is made by a new director and has two new stars of whom almost nobody has heard, and so could get lost in the blockbuster rush. The time is 1924 and the place London and Paris, where the modest little Olympic Games (whose's shame it ever changed) are being held. Possibly the only race instantly recognizable is that of Sir John Gielgud, as a don.

EYE OF THE NEEDLE A plot with more holes than a kitchen colander does not prevent *Eye of the Needle* from being great entertainment, much like one of those novels characterized by people as being "a good read." Donald Sutherland makes his starry way through the action, accompanied by beautiful Kate Nelligan. Good spy stuff, second-world-war vintage.

FROM MAO TO MOZART, Isaac Stern the violinist went to China in 1979 on a musical pilgrimage and the result is a beguiling film, *From Mao to Mozart* winner of the Oscar for best documentary in 1982. What with the music and the smiles, it almost makes you believe in the brotherhood of man.

WINTER OF OUR DREAMS, Written and directed by John Dugan, gives nostalgia the back of its hand and informs and entertains us with a story of our contemporaries, people we know exist here and now. Overlooked in the no doubt well-deserved hoopla about Gielgud, *Winter* has the best performance yet from Judy Davis and

by David Thomson

DANCE FUNDING

Dance topped the drama ones which overtook drama funding in the wake of the Federal Government's smaller allocation to the Australia Council in 1982. The Theatre Board decided its main priority: strained circumstances would be to maintain its funding for dance and young people's theatre companies. The few companies in these areas are of vital concern to the Board because of their strategic importance and financial vulnerability.

The amounts channelled to dance by the Australia Council is considerably less than what goes to drama — \$1,387,866 compared to \$3,479,440 in the 1982 grant totals — and naturally there are always some worthwhile projects which miss out. The most requests in the latest grant allocations are the Sydney Dance Company, Australian Dance Theatre, Australian Ballet School, Queensland Ballet Company, West Australian Ballet Company and the Tasmanian Dance Company. The smaller groups supported include One Extra Dance Theatre, Liberators, Human Vortex, the North Queensland Ballet Company and the昆士蘭 Dance Company.

But — and it's a big but — there is also the Australian Ballet. The national classical company endorses the Australia Council and goes straight to the Government for its funding which, for 1982 is \$1,602,000, plus a share of the two Harsebath orchestras which have been granted \$2,740,000 between them. It's a great deal of money and the Australian Ballet has enormous responsibilities to go with it — and it is up to us choreographers and taxpayers to make sure they are carried out by observing and commenting when we feel the company is not contributing to the development of dance in Australia.

CHOREOGRAPHY CHOICE

The four Australian choreographers chosen to take part in the intensive two-week course for choreographers and composers in Adelaide in January are Gerry Lester, John Selwyn, Helen Harkness and Wendy Butterworth. At the time of their selection, three of these young choreographers were working in Adelaide and one in Melbourne.

BARR ON FILM

Lon Ellis, who collaborated with the choreographer of dance drama, Margaret Barr, to make the short film *Woman Climbing Mountains*, expects to be in India in January to begin another film involving Margaret Barr. The footage shot in India would revolve around Mr Barr's research for a new dance drama on the subject of Gandhi. She plans to stage it in Sydney next September with Kai Tin Chum, Artistic Director of the One Four Dance Theatre, in the central role.

The film, which would also be shot in Sydney after the completion of the dance drama work, is planned to reflect Mr Barr's fascinating background to dance — it goes back many decades to working with Martha Graham and at Dartington Hall in its early days — as well as the life experiences which have shaped her approach to her art.

GOAT MUSIC

The years along the ranch of Melbourne dance critics about *The Man Who*, at *Wave Dance* which includes a *Wave* stealing paper goes in the past, common of a rock-horror to explain from the former Babylon dancer, Leonard Kozlov. "The goat has got the best music."

SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY NEWS

Ken Soukup, a former general manager of the Old Tote Theatre Company has been appointed as director of the Sydney Dance Company. Since the Old Tote went into liquidation in 1978 after the Theatre Board of the Australia Council lost confidence in its viability and withdrew its subsidy, Mr Soukup has worked at a variety of jobs including operations manager for Hays and as a theatre consultant.

The appointment was made by the Sydney Dance Company's board in the absence of its artistic director, Graeme Murphy, who was on tour with the rest of the company in London and Hong Kong.

In their third overseas tour since 1979 the company attracted enthusiastic audiences, but the London critics were far less delighted than their American counterparts earlier this year. In fact, some of them were positively aggressive in their



David White (Murphy) in the film's first scene.

clubs of the Australian group. Nicholas Drongopolis managed to shirk the dancers and the Australian audience in one sentence. He accused Graeme Murphy, "Tired with an understating and easily pleased audience," of lifting "other people's ideas and styles wholesale." Yet in the same review, Drongopolis writes: "Murphy has a shrewd sense of theatre: his work is full of pleasant surprises. We are certainly not bored, and if the ideas are not fully realised and the dance seems a little disappointed at times, at least the choreographic talent and the ideas will just about manage to hold our attention."

After the third program Drongopolis said the SDC had "pursued a libidinal company dominated by an inventive choreographer Graeme Murphy, full of intriguing theatrical ideas but like Telly, or Cohen, clearly not particularly interested in much beyond their music and movement, although still managing to fascinate in terms of movement alone with occasional strokes of impulsive frothy fun and a sense of dramatic impact."

John Pomeroy, of *The Press*, described the company as "trash, scandalously and unexpectedly as the arts comes from." He said that pure dance was not their strong point "but as dance objects they leave English companies standing."

feature THE FUTURE OF

by Jill Sykes

Dance in Australia comes under close analysis in a report compiled and released by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council. While the report concentrates on the seven dance organisations given major funding by the Council, it also encompasses smaller established groups, looking back to the history of dance in this country and forward to its future.

The Australian Ballet, recipient of the largest subsidy from the Federal Government, comes in for the most criticism. Its current policies, while making impressive box office figures, are not considered compatible with all its stated objectives in its original charter. In particular, the following aim is singled out: "To develop a repertoire of one-third the three-act classics, one-third the contemporary classics, one-third the indigenous ballets with Australian choreographers, composers and designers."

In considering that objective, the report concludes: "In terms of the number of Australian choreographers, composers and designers represented in the repertoire 1973-1979 the national company is at present Australian in name only."

A breakdown of the figures for this period shows the Australian Ballet produced 62 works, of which 61 percent to 75 percent were full-length. No full-length original ballets by Australian choreographers were produced and the percentage of short work performances by Australian choreographers ranged from one per cent to 10 per cent in this period. No Australian ballets have been included in the repertoire of the Australian Ballet for overseas tours between 1975-80.

The report states that it is the responsibility of Australia's largest and most heavily subsidised dance company to help develop creative talent in this country. Significantly, it

even goes so far as to suggest: "Encouraging funds within the general grant to the Australian Ballet could help to encourage the inclusion of more works by Australian choreographers, designers and composers and to ensure the continued development of such innovative projects as the new Danetti group and choreographic seasons. Funds could also be earmarked for the employment of additional dancers, student choreographers, tutors and trainee conductors."

Concern is declared at the decreasing number of dancers in the Australian Ballet — 51 in 1981 draws so a close, which is considerably less than at any time during the last seven years recorded in the report — and the four changes of artistic director between 1974 and 1979. It gives an overloading of work because of the number of performances and extent of touring as one of the reasons for the uneven standards noted increasingly by the public and critics.

The Australian Ballet's preference for full-length spectacles such as *The Merry Widow* is condemned, but should they wish to persist, it is suggested that "the same level of expenditure, time and planning" be given to an Australian work. More attention to the selection and programming of repertoire is recommended. For example, a thematic approach to triple bills rather than a "something for everyone" philosophy. It is suggested that this could help broaden the company's appeal and attract new audiences, an aim in which the Australian Ballet has fallen back over recent years, it says.

Anyone still wondering about the necessity of the dancers' strike against the company's administration and its interference in artistic policy may like to note two excerpts from Australian Ballet annual reports. Both come from the administrator, Peter Balen.

In 1974, he wrote "... presenting



DANCE



From *Mozart's Aids Galle*. Photo: *Alma Galle*

Mozart's Aids Galle and *Alma Galle* in *Alma Galle*.

nothing but programs of old favourites like *Swan Lake* and *Grethe* would quickly turn the Australian Ballet into a living museum. It is essential that new and experimental works should be introduced from time to time."

By 1979, he had changed his mind. "We are a classically orientated company. This does not mean that we have constantly to repeat ourselves and concentrate only on 19th-century works. But whether we should also be doing the way-out type of modern

experimental work (sometimes consisting of obscure plot, cacophonous music, contortions and writhings) seems more and more questionable."

Since the Australian Ballet has never dared do anything that might approach such a description, even the most reactionary subscriber need not worry. Fortunately, other dancers are experimenting in Australia, and getting the backing of the Australia Council through the Theatre Board.

The most innovative projects are outside the scope of this report and don't get more than a passing mention in the 100 pages of prose and 210 pages of tables and references that make up this report, which is available, free, to members of the public on request to the Australia Council, PO Box 302, North Sydney, NSW 2060.

However, the regional companies generally get praise for their rise in standards since the mid-seventies and their concentration on Australian content and finding their own identities. In brief, its conclusions in that area were:

The Australian Dance Theatre is praised for high technical standards, good community access, which it pursues energetically, and an estimable example of raising funds from the private sector.

The Queensland Ballet Company is complimented on being both sensitive to the preferences of Queensland audiences for classical ballet and beginning to diversify its appeal to build new audiences by the regular introduction of contemporary works.

The Sydney Dance Company is considered successful in building audiences for contemporary dance, and for establishing its own direction and identity.

The West Australian Ballet is said to have experienced "the most serious identity crisis between 1974-1980" but given the financial support is expected to build audiences and develop its own style.

review

Hunchback — unfulfilled potential

by Jill Sykes

The potential of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* remains the strongest thing about it after its opening scenes at Melbourne's Palais Theatre.

Venturing into the dense anatomy of Victor Hugo's 19th century novel about medieval Paris, the Australian Ballet's team of creators have come up with some bold ideas — but they need a great deal more shaping and some restructuring as well if the ballet is going to make the dramatic statement that is intended.

Given the previous troubles of the Australian Ballet as the tale of writing, it is hard to predict the future of this ambitious full-length work, but I believe something potential could come out of it if it is well given the creative and rehearsal time it should have had in the first place.

The main reason for my faith is the way that George Ciprian, who is responsible for the production and scenarios, and Dobie Fauriol, who selected and arranged the music, for Bela Bartok, have deliberately ignored the superficial delights of a crowd-pleaser and attempted to explore the music and visual motifs of the central figures.

Whether the choreographer Bruce Wells — a craftsman rather than a great artist from what I have seen of his efforts so far — can use these opportunities to express such intangible ideas in movement has yet to be proved.

The set designs by Rosalyn Fendrikson are strikingly dramatic and atmospheric — but his costumes are far too busy. This simply accentuates the problem that besets the whole ballet so far: the lack of focus. The flurries of Act I as it was presented in the Melbourne season, is a blur of flying fabric and distracting performance. At times there were two conflicting layers of dance action against a background of writhing or reeling beggars.

That can be relatively easily fixed. The uncertain focus on the principal participants will be much harder to correct, requiring a major shift of some scenes in my opinion.

To me to compress the secondary Frodo, the Archdeacon of Notre Dame Cathedral, has both a warped mind and a desire for the street dancer La Esmeralda she in turn attracts the attention of the young poet Gringore, and is attracted to Phoebus, the Captain of the King's Archers, he is already engaged to Fleur-de-Lys, daughter of a wealthy noble family. Quasimodo, the hunchbacked bellringer and foster son of Frodo, observes all and tries to square his love for Esmeralda with his loyalty to Frodo, while coping with the kind of life his repellent appearance brings him.

In successive scenes amongst the rich and poor of Paris — perhaps too many but there are fast-moving — all kinds of murder and mayhem take place. Frodo, Phoebus and Esmeralda are all dead by the end of the story, and Quasimodo might as well be. The sadist thing is that you don't care. None of the characters has been developed sufficiently to provide the audience association essential to theatrical drama. Worse, the team putting the ballet together doesn't seem to have been able to decide who to make the central figures.

Indications are that Frodo and Quasimodo are the pivotal characters, but these indications are not carried through. While Frodo begins and concludes the ballet in the two states of his mind, we are not shown his inner aspects early enough, nor clearly enough how this influences the lives of so many.

Quasimodo deserves our sympathy, yet it is not until we see him up in his bell-tower cyme in Act III that the real impact of his personality is made. He would have been a much stronger character throughout the ballet if his private persona could have been established before we were presented with his public activities. His duel with Frodo and his solo in Act I don't fulfil the promise of their placing or music, though the shape of the idea is there.

Conversely Gringore the poet gets more time and attention than his catalytic role in the action seems to deserve. Likewise Fleur-de-Lys, although the rationale for her long solo is two-fold: a sequence of pure dance and a characterisation of what La Esmeralda is up against in her desire for Phoebus — a much better character, sufficiently if briefly represented by his choreography.

La Esmeralda is the least well portrayed — of the principal figures and almost designed



have seen in classical ballet — and that is saying something. The lack of catharsis and sex appeal appeared to be due to antiregion, possibly in both performance and choreography.

The combination of compositions by Bartok provided an exciting score to my ears, though there were a few ingenious exceptions in Act I, when it was too subtle for the stage action. This also occurred in Act II when Quasimodo was being roughed up — to a gentle piece.

So far this review reads like a catalogue of disappointments. But it would not have been worth writing about these if a great deal had not already been achieved in this 1981 remembrance of a great novel to the balletic stage, and it did improve as it went along. The quality of the choreography



A woman Moon of Grey and One Extra
(Pheasant in the 4th's Hunchback of Notre Dame)

fabulous which I realize I have written so (indeed) is uneven. As its heart it is fixed and original, at its worst it is a repetitive dancepiece and not broad enough in its range to encompass the cross-section of characters that the story presents. I think it is within the ability of the choreographer to improve on what he has done.

The dancing of the principals on opening night was competent though unsatisfactory in terms of characterization and polish. I saw Robert Cox as Frodo, David Burch as Quasimodo, Lynette Mann as Fleur-de-Lys, Dale Baker as Pheasant, Marny Fleming as Gringott, and Joanne Muehl as La Esmeralda.



Kai Tai Chan

One Extra — its own outlook

by Bill Shoemaker

Contrary to what I had originally thought, the One Extra Dance Company is still very much alive, albeit in the backwoods of Redfern.

The latest series of performances at the Performance Centre show us a group of dancers, unknown, untired and largely unknown, presenting an evening of dances, halleluied by attitudes and attributes similar to the tight coherent ensemble of old. That they had as much potency as they did is due in no small amount to their gaudy lights, Kai Tai Chan.

Most of his former dancers have left him and what he has now he hopes to weld into a workable group early in 1982, able to present his collaboration with Louis Nowra and Sarah de Jong. *The Cleared*. That this work will combine music, dance and the spoken word is null a guess to what has made the One Extra ensemble unique in Australia — and Pina Bausch unique in Germany, and Twyla Tharp in America.

As far as One Extra's latest "man" offering, *Person*, is concerned, I get the feeling of getting through a Robert Wilson's *Phallic Glass "opera"* filtered through an Australian experience. It comes down to such set pieces as "the Victorian Perce", which is a situation highlighted in Wilson's *Life and Times of Joseph Smith*.

A new period gathering of persons, ridiculed with faces sweating flies and singing Handel's "Come ye sons of art" as an expression of totally displaced creativity is one example — strangely reminiscent of a point already made in *Werra Pines of Hesperia Ruck*. The recurring figure of the dancer and the tree on the horizon is another example of Wilson's hallucinogenic theatre.

Kai Tai collects a gathering of Australian patrons as sets of marauding scenes dressing their own kind for "memento-mors", a solitary night traveller is an Everyman, taken up and absorbed by suitable people and experiences. He takes suitable experiences like the "Aron Lady" and turns them into all-deceiving haunts.

He builds and builds his aggression but early leaves them bare, the culmination of the drama is of people clawing themselves to death only to be reawakened by a holy Florence Nightingale figure touching them all back to life. It's art! Kai Tai had painted himself and his collaborators (who were in fact all of the company) into a corner and couldn't get themselves out. It is that sort of attitude, that utterance of dance "under" its theatrical aim that keeps One Extra alive. Whenever Kai Tai Chan or any of his other choreographers are to be danced they, and their dancers strike the false inquest and deli.

That is what they will have to come to grips with and rationalise in the future and also something they will have to back because, as I have said before, all these smaller "things" dance companies can't agree to a homogeneous "dance" superior. If they do they will all look like each other and all go under together.

Kai Tai Chan's One Extra Dance Company has got an own outlook and personality, all it has to do is pare down and eliminate what they cannot do superbly. The rest is their gift to the dance scene, and it is what is going to keep them going, no matter how many individuals come and go.

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

by Bill Shearbridge

That the internal affairs of the Australian Ballet should come to such a pass as an all-out defiant strike by its dancers, is a sad reflection of the malaise that has been creeping over the company for years. Dancers, while some other members of the work force don't happily downlook at the less provocative Hothouse, the AB dancers have shown their dissatisfaction by seceding. In October last they took a concerted, united final stand.

The rapport between Mr Babco, administrator and the dancers has never been cordial, past artistic directors Helpmann and Woodburn had always pointed to Babco's unwelcome interference as the reason for their resignation.

Ideally, it is the administrator's job to keep the financial accounts open for the artistic director's aspirations and ambitions, just as Lincoln Kirstein does for George Balanchine. It is the symbiosis that has helped make the NY City Ballet the greatest ballet company in the world.

In the Australian Ballet it is apparently the dancer's and artistic director's job to struggle within the financial and artistic dictates of the administrator. It is a relationship that cannot produce good lasting results. The Australian Ballet Foundation Board has never really made an attempt to reconcile the difficulties. Their attitude has always been a non-committal "watch us do gas" outlook. They have also never given a public account of themselves in the light of company policy.

Perhaps the best thing could have been a "double dissolution" of the company and Board and a later reconstruction under a new board, administrator, artistic director and policy.

It could also be healthy to have funding for the Australian Ballet put back under the control of the Australia Council. Whatever happens, if things continue as they have of late, the Australian Ballet will continue to be debilitated, slowly and third rate. A change could only be for the better.

NSW

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET (204548)
Opera Theatre, SOH. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Latest version of Victor Hugo's 19th Century novel about medieval Paris. To Dec 21.
KINETIC ENERGY DANCE COMPANY (2045800)
Chapel House, St Andrews Cathedral. *Two Voices* a collaboration by Tom Shepcott, Graham Jones and the company. Dec 4-5-10-11, and 12 8pm.

QLD

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (2212777)
Lindsay Kemp and Company present a three version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* — as you have never seen it before. Jan 19-30.

SA

AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE (2132084)
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TAS

TASMANIAN DANCE COMPANY (216874)
Salamanca Place Hobart Gallery Performance. Works by Louise Burns, Jenny Kinder, Neil Adams and Chris Babinekas. Sat Dec 5.

VIC

MOVING ARTS COMPANY (4185033)
Fantasy dance theatre. Fri Dec 4 then Thurs to Sund to Dec 20. 8pm. Sund 4pm.
NATIONAL THEATRE (5348321)
LaSalle's Flamenco. Dazzling Flamenco dance with moonish undertones. To Dec 5.
OPEN STAGE THEATRE (3477586)
737 Swanston St. Carlton. Solo performances of Orissi classical Indian dance by Ramachandra. Dec 9-12. 8pm.

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OPERA

CARMENS TO BURN?

Can there be too much *Bust* in the World? This year the State Opera of South Australia has promoted a new *Carverns* directed by Tito Copalanzo with designs by Hugh Culman to great acclaim and full houses.

In 1982 Victorian State Opera, a mere 600 km away is to premiere a new *Carverns* directed and designed by we know not whom, probably also to great acclaim. To add a touch of difference the Victorians are casting a black American singer in the title role.

For mine as now lost in the mists of time, the South Australian production was unavailable to travel in 1982. Letters flew back and forth between General Managers, Boards, Chairmen and ultimately Ministers of the Arts? To no avail. Two separate factories each able to digger will ply their *Carverns* inside (independent of each other with as far as much as a prop pocket of *Carverns* 'A' passing between them. Sad.

It must also be a sign of the times that within weeks of SADO's *Carverns* playing in Adelaide, the Queensland Ballet and the Australian Ballet also pushed through their versions of — you've guessed it *Carverns*. What this country needs is not an Australia Council but an editor!

PETER JORDAN AT THE VSO

Australia has not exactly been struck with talented young producers of opera in recent years and one seriously had begun to wonder where the successors of the Cagliosi and Lovaggs were to come from.

One of the rays of hope on the horizon was Peter Jordan who, after getting his start in Queensland, was doing some most exciting work in Melbourne including that with the VSO. He then went to Britain this year on a shared scholarship study grant to work at both English National Opera and The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. It is good to know from a recent announcement, not only will he not be lost to us, but that he will be back to the VSO on a full-time basis as its resident director of production. David has been adept at picking talent in many areas over the years and one feels confident that he is on to a winner with this one.



info

Contributing Editor: Justin Macdonnell

ELISABETH SODERSTROM IN CONCERT

In all the flurry of the Adelaide Festival of Arts programme announcement in October, one gem became somewhat lost. Not only is that superb Swedish Soprano, Elisabeth Soderstrom to sing the existing role of Emilia Marty in Janáček's *The Makropulos Affair* but also, during the Festival, give one more only in Adelaide on March 19th.

Ms Soderstrom is undoubtedly one of the greatest living singing actresses in opera today and I personally would "walk over hot coals" to see her in any role. The fact that we are to have a bonus recital (accompanied by John Winther) is good news indeed. Her artistry on the concert platform is as rare and as engaging as that of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf at her best. Elisabeth Soderstrom

RHEINGOLD FOR MELBOURNE

It seems that Melbourne will have the first glimpse of the long-awaited Australian Ring Cycle next year when Victoria State Opera presents its new production of *Rheingold* there. The production is to be designed by award-winning John Truscott will open the concert hall of the equally long-awaited Melbourne Arts Centre.

No producer has as yet been announced but the word is that business Robert Altmann who has been resident with the Australian Opera for many years, will sing the role of Wotan.

Rather than merely vapouring at the Australian Opera on their usual rather treasonous way over its inability for another season, to mount a Ring Cycle today critics might take time to consider that it may now well be that a stagnate company such as VSO could be better geared, in time, to undertake this ambitious project than an ensemble repertory company like the AO where voices and stages have to fulfill many functions in a busy season and can easily be occupied with one project only.

Robert Altmann

Mystery



Peasant Wisdom



Faith



Church



Comedy



FROM \$8 A TICKET

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THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA

Singers and producers

by Ken Healey

Which is primary in opera, the singers or the production? This is hardly a question that I expected to be asking myself during October. But at about noon I left Australia, where production values are generally high, and went to North America. There were international stars in the three operas I saw, and all of the productions were good. But in Canada and the USA the question of the primacy of the singer or the producer certainly poses itself.

As if to underline my own leading question, I find myself thinking in terms of the three singers who filled the principal roles in *Turandot* in Alberta, Canada, and of the very possessed Butterfly of Marina Kabanova in Montreal. However, from San Francisco, where Teresa Berganza was probably the definitive Carmen of the generation, the memory is of nothing outside the context of the production of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. My question much answered in our time singers are at the service of productions in opera.

Posing a question about which comes first, the singer or the production, may seem as dangerous as asking about the chicken and the egg. At all events, we all know that the music in opera begets the production. But I am not asking about music, which is obviously central, it is the star system which is under observation.

Turandot is an excellent choice for the Edmonton Opera Association, since it can afford to spend up to \$1,250,000 on each of its four productions each year, and therefore no import salaries of the highest quality. In fact, both Marina Polguere, who sang Liu, and Emanuele Marino, the Calaf, are Canadians. Marino was a motor mechanic in Edmonton before gaining international fame. He looks good, and has a strong, clear voice that fills the largest house with ease. I am afraid that his Calaf made me nostalgic for the sheer beauty of Donald Smith's "Mexican Dances", which I heard bring applause from the very tradesmen who were refurbishing the old Elizabethan theatre in Newtown in pre-Opera House days.

The Bulgarian soprano Galina Savova was *Turandot*, like Marino powerful if a little unsuited. The 2700-seat, all-purpose auditorium in Edmonton is not acoustically kind, the amateur chorus and 50-piece professional orchestra both being somewhat overwhelmed. For its quarter of a million dollars, Edmonton did not even

get its own sets and costumes, but had hired a serviceable stage setting from Vancouver. Only in the palace garden, where Turandot's obligatory staircase had been revised to look like the entrance to an underground railway, was there any hint of making-the-living-German-produced capable, and Anton Guadagnio was careful in the pit.

With *Madama Butterfly* to follow within a few days, I found myself marvelling at Puccini's ability to sustain an unbroken orchestral line while giving his singers short exchanges of dialogue, and even declamations. This is particularly remarkable as emotional climaxes are gradually reached, one feels that a lesser composer would have arrived at too many climaxes, or none at all. After *Janáček*, it is easy to dismiss the less orchestral than Puccini, but *Turandot* demonstrates his mastery, and Edmonson did about as well as could be expected in the absence of a true resident company.

It is probably a little unfair to replace *Madama Butterfly* in any consideration of superior vocal production. However there was a one-woman opera, that is a *Sings* winning an international competition in Montreal in 1967, Romanian soprano Marina Krlivosci has become as famous as *Butterfly* in Canada's own *Maria Pellegrini*, and partly so. She exhibits a quality of vulnerability suited by her petite figure, and not too much diminished by an untiring habit of keeping her arms horizontal, as though she were playing at toy aeroplanes. Let us hope that she does not see this as butterfly-wings, or even a crucified stance.

This time the settings had come up from Maria, and were suitable for a projection of clouds and sea during *Butterfly*'s up-lifts like *Janáček*'s *Princess*. I found this extension of her vocal state quite affecting, although I do not expect that it would stand subsequent viewing too well. Ironically, as Krlivosci's *Butterfly* became more up-lifted after interval, the good version of *Peter Symphonies* grew in stature into the best second act I have seen in this opera. *Agustino Bordinato*'s *Pinkerton* was youthful and handsome without being vocally drabbing, while Michelangelo Veltri as musical director tended to keep the music running in the expense of some exquisite moments which called out for arresting. The Montreal orchestra is very fine.

The single weakness in both of these *Puccini* operas which weakens them to some degree for me lies in the story lines. The third act of *Madama Butterfly* simply moves too slowly towards the inevitable, how we wish that *Pinkerton* and Kate would come, and never mind *Prince*

Yamadori. As for *Turandot* who can any longer believe that even *Calaf* could transform the blood-thirsty *Los Purosos*? A performance like that of *Madama Sawayama* convicts as a hairless murderer, but fails cruelly as a blazing bird. And anyway, poor little *Liu*, the nearest thing to a heroine in the opera, is dead before the on-line sublimation of *Calaf*'s overpowers *Turandot* with that age, somewhat discarded weapon, a living lion.

Canada does not claim to be at the forefront of world opera, and the incursions of Australia's *Richard Basinger* into Vancouver during the 1970s did little to advance the art form. But in San Francisco they do pretend to greatness, and with this season's *Carmen* they have certainly attained it. *Maestro Adler* about to step down after 28 years in charge, could hardly have retired to greater acclaim than this which will follow this production and *Shostakovich's Lady Macbeth of Minsk*, which preceded it.

Musically, the score was as close as possible to what *Don Koss*, and how the great tenorship glories in the session of all that narrative of Ernest Gaudet. The spoken words were amplified for the vast War Memorial auditorium, and a number of striking changes were heard in the score, notably an extended fight scene between *Jose* and *Escamillo*, a men's chorus after that of the energetic girl in Act I, and a most effective conclusion immediately after the climax of 'The Flower Song'. The orchestra also played under some of the dialogue.

I am aware that the edition published by Fritz Deser in 1964 raises more musical questions than it answers, but *Karl Herbert Adler* conducted this score with a sense of integrity, giving the stage action ample time, and following their instructions about soft singing in some of the opera's most telling moments.

It may already be obvious that this review is not going to concentrate on the marvellous *Carmen* of *Teresa Berganza*, there is still so much to be said about *Puccini's* production. I found *Berganza's* *Carmen* uniquely right — neither slattern nor cruel prima donna. This 1969 is highly intelligent, but lacks formal education. She is never dignified but radiates a native dignity along with her magnetic quality of leadership. The score is really at the command of the role's demands.

So among it this San Francisco cast that can never has any problem deciding that *Carmen* has three worthy suitors, *Jose*, *Escamillo*, and *Zampa*, now that the mild, unrequited suitor *Don José* should be the man of her choice. *Francis Bonifati* was a believable, bewitched *Jose*, the

Mexican (*Hilberta Cook*), though not a perfect figure of a village maiden sang the role as I have never heard it sung before. There was a wonderfully fat job of a *Mexican*, and the chorus — but that takes in details to the production of *Jean-Pierre Ponnelle*.

Consider the miracle of a production that began with finely observed detail without ever drawing attention to itself, it remained at the service of the opera. It was not perfect, making occasional concessions to the need for contextual sound as at the end of the scene in *Lilias Pantoja's* *severe*, and unable to avoid having inevitable superlatives across the stage at intervals during the opening scene. But what a stand was here engaged in production, including design! Unlike the producers in Canada, *Ponnelle* was his own designer and opted for a dimly lit, grey-white wall setting, with four steps leading up to it. He made no attempt to disguise the black borders on each side, and worked wonders with his basic setting. Only *escamille* suspended from a black and white, presumably in turn suspended from a sky hook, spotted the mountain pass of the third act.

Despite such individual lapses, this production ranks with the very best we have seen from *John Cooley*, and even surpasses that production in the interlocking of the detail. I took notes meticulously but will not attempt to reproduce them here. I know that *Puccini's* *Carmen* overshadows the mark, his *Flower Song* being seen as the woman's dream. *Carmen* though most rank among his greatest triumphs. This is a difficult opera to bring off completely, and at four hours (including three intervals) it is a long night in the theatre. My one regret is that I cannot record every subsequent performance during the season.

Faust — Marguerite's triumph

by Ken Healy

The Victoria State Opera has done well to set Gounod's *Faust* in the Victorian era. Despite its timeliness the work has not worn well, and anyway was never close to the *Dr Faustus* of other Marlowe or Goethe. So the VSO have emphasised the nineteenth century nature of the piece and cast it accordingly.

At the centre of this opera is the soprano, Marguerite, and not Faust at all. In truth the finally triumphant, even Mephistopheles, while Faust stands watching, a mere secondary figure. And with Joan Carden's singing at once luminous in tone and convincing in intensity, the opera found its ideal Marguerite. This was the sort of singing and acting that brings crowds to the opera house to hear a star, those who recall Miss Carden's return to Australia ten years ago to sing this role for the Australian Opera will not be surprised at her triumph.

As a house, the Mephistopheles of Noel Mangan was so apt in the Victorian setting that it is difficult to imagine him according nearly as well in a traditional production. Mangan's is an expansive, naturally genial presence, indeed his Mephisto was of little more than pantomime malignity. Given Gounod's music it hardly mattered, and Mangan sang the song of the Golden Calf with enough style and flair to have stolen musical honours from anyone but Carden.

I had missed young New Zealand tenor Keith Lewis as Nadir in *The Pearl Fishers*, and was both amazed and delighted at his vocal aptness for the French repertoire. Not a big man, he lacks the fat tone of mature baritone, but has a clearly focused, lyric sound with ample warmth and power. He sings a good deal of Mozart ably.

Add to these excellent principals the unlikely but totally captivating picture of Suzanne Steele in the trouser role of Siebel, Ian Cousins as an adequate Valentin in earlier scenes who died superbly, and a career Marie of dramatic and vocal strength from Glendon Menzies. Then there was the chorus, youthful, well trained, and in fine, full voice. Richard Donald's, also predominantly youthful orchestra played competently, but without

the depth of string tone which the score needs. All in all, this was a fine production.

No concentration of praise upon singers should blind the fact that their effect was made within the production of the renowned team of Bosch and Woodard. Without the huge design budget of the national company, whose their work is most often seen, this producer and designer have given us a visually unified set and spent their money wisely on well tailored Victorian costumes. Four columns topped by arches served admirably in most configurations to suggest the appropriate locale with a suggestion of Victorian gothic. A deep touch was the occasional appearance of swaths of Melbourne blue-tinted around the stage's edge.

I applied also the remnants of Anthony Bosch's production, he avoided extraneous nineteenth century "moments", such as of the sudden appearance of Mephistopheles, the magical transformation of the old Faust into a youth, and the breaking of Valentin's sword. All these were accomplished without loss, which served to underline the consciousness of a living opera, whose figure became a glowing skeleton.

Finally, though, the evening belonged to its Marguerite in a voice which might have been a pity in a better opera. The long vibrant line of the final trio is scored on the memory of all who heard it, Gounod's upward modulations may be unachievable, but they tell us what a practical musician he was. He was well served by Richard Donald and his two of principal singers.

WA's Magic Flute

by Charles Southwood

Even so long after the event, I'm still excited by the WA Opera Company's final production for 1981, *Magic Flute*. It's an amazing sort of work, of course, but the same company this year achieved only a fraction of the success, for me, with other thrilling like *Bottom* and *Tales of Hoffmann*. What this production had that the others didn't was that critical blend of ensemble, technical excellence, imaginative focus and emotional commitment which just explodes in the theatre. Following, as it does, an excellent concert performance of *Art and Galatea* by the WA University Collegium Musicum under David Timley, it makes me wonder if there isn't something special about this century minor-theatre for our performers. It's a



Joan Carden (Marguerite) in the VSO's *Faust*

review

overall point because, in the presence of certain limiting factors, the performers' satisfaction becomes the unlooked-for!

Opening night left strong memories: sensitive, passionate singing and sharp-edged orchestral playing, both greatly to the credit of musical director Gerald Krap; broke gaspers through a plot which all of a sudden seemed perfectly shaped and clear; and overall a kind of side-show gusto which never obscured the seriousness of the matter in hand. I've always known the Immortals dead! in *Major Flaw*. I didn't know their laughter was still a resource in its pages. Just think of it: the cheek-to-cheek spiritual processes of such import, symbols of such unspeakable significance, in a comedy hardly three hours long. And not even a fully fledged opera, a suggestion? The crispness echoes with irony from the start, and Jacobo Kaufmann's lighting and production and Andrew Carter's designs highlighted the fact in a presentation as gaudy and unbridled as a train. Scented with comic, gold and lime-green light, Carter's clipped and painted canvas had something of the style of farground illusionism — but always an illusionism backed by the gods!

The best of it, though, was that the mainly local cast struck on a set of characterisations vivid and distinctive in themselves yet nearly perfect in overall balance. They had good material of course, and Kaufmann's hand was there in movement plotted to lend firm, discrete support to detail and grand design alike.

James Malcolm's Tamino was sensitive, articulate and markedly boyish, and this actually added scope to his pilgrimage from youthful inguine and vulnerability to maturity. Marilyn Quade's grace and strong, fresh voice served her admirably as Pamina. Here was really the best performance of the night. Young, beautiful, sensitive but Tamino: she made a vigorous counterpart to Chosen Leishmann's Queen of the Night, mature, witty, sexy and passionately bent on revenge. After the contrast of her Miss earlier this year, Leishmann cut loose in a performance of astonishing power, proving just how dramatic and dagger-like that coloratura in Act II can be.

Ian Warrup was warm as Papageno, aided by a perfectly delicious Papageno in Maribeth Williamson. It's Papageno, of course, the man content with a mug of wine and a happy heart, who anchors the transcendental business of *Major Flaw* in earthy reality, and that in turn gives his comedy its weight. Wittingly or not, Warrup played down the weighty side of the character in favour of cockiness, but without doing too much violence to the



roler's deeper resonances. He and a pre-black, leopard-skin-draped as Monostatos did much to give the evening its truly understated of "comic".

It's all a far cry from Bergman, of course, but not so far as the treatment of Sarastro. You looked in vain if you looked for Uink Gold's Sarastro-King. Instead Chris Waddell gave us Sarastro-renture, inward, wise but visibly strained by the terrible responsibility placed on him by Pamina's father. The Keeper of the Secret-fold Circle of the Sun can scarcely be less than ingering, however he is played, but intonations of fatigue (in truly subtle about "women's chatter", for instance) gave to reflect wryly on the impossibility, for a mere mortal, of what Sarastro has to do, namely, to shoulder and ultimately defend the awesome burden of the Eternal Maculature. On this point the Immortals laugh with Papageno. And so must we, if not as Sarastro himself then at least, humbly, at his belabored chorus of priests, solemn, significant... but those newspapers! The unerring suggestion of little countesses simply would not go away!

I've not mentioned everyone that I should have. To the three Ladies, Gerns, pious-violists and the rest of the chorus, apologies and thanks! This was theatre as it should be: amusing, enragating, surprising, sensitive. The production also shows what power lies with a local company alive to its limitations yet creative and committed in the face of a great work of art. So, I fancy, it must have been in the Golden Age, when Aeschylus's nymphs and shepherds mounted their own scenes of music-theatre! It's good to see it can happen that way still.

• *W. A. Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro**
The Major Flaw



OPERA *guide*

ACT

CANBERRA OPERA (478845)

Asks by Giuseppe Verdi. A spectacular production conducted by Gillard and featuring Angelo Marano. Staged at the Indoor Sports Centre. Bruce. Dec 10 and 12.

NSW

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (30588)

Opera Theatre, SOH: The Barbered Bride by Smetana (in English), conductor, Geoffrey Arnold, producer, Pramsyl Kobi, designer, Sanka Bena Svobodova, choreographer, Astrida Sturva, with Glensy Fowler, Ron Stevens, Gwenna Pwer and Donald Skarris. This disappointing rendition of the Czech favourite has been largely revamped for the summer season with hopefully happier results. Jan 11, 13, 19 (nats 23 and 30).

Madame Butterfly by Puccini, conductors, Stuart Challender and David Kriem, producer, John Copley, designers, Henry Blanton and Michael Stennett, with Rhonda Bruce, Joan Gordon, Lynne Ganton, Kathleen Moore, Jennifer Birmingham, Anson

Austin, Jon Sydney, Sergei Bogladin, Lamberto Furlan, John Pringle and Gregory Tursach. Copley's highly successful production is a mainstay of the AO's repertoire and testifies to a series of the company's leading house talent. Jan 14, 20, 23 and 27.

Comedies of Three Centuries: Romaine by William Sheld (English), conductor, Richard Borymgo, producer, Christopher Ranshaw, designer, Kenneth Rowell. *The Bear* by William Walton (English), conductor, David Kriem, producer, Robin Lovejoy, designer, Tony Lingwood and Be-la-tian by Jacques Offenbach (French/English/Italian/ "sensation"), conductor, Richard Borymgo, producer, Christopher Ranshaw, designer, Kenneth Rowell. Robyn Lovejoy's exquisite production of *The Bear* featuring Heather Begg's scintillating performance as Poppea will be joined by two repertoire curiosities: Sheld's *Romaine* premiered in 1782 and Offenbach's knockout one-act *Be-la-tian*. Jan 28, 30. La Traviata.

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Music with paprika and other spices

by Fred Blanks

This has been Barok Year

All round the world the centenary of the Hungarian composer's birth has been anxiously celebrated, and nowhere more so than in his native country from which he departed for America in 1940. Interestingly, Hungary has had some remarkable changes of opinion about Béla Bartók. His reputation as a musical pioneer was high there before the second World War, but afterwards with the change of regime his music was branded by the Communist authorities as formalist, and, anti-people, for a long time its performance received little encouragement.

But then, when it became obvious, within a decade of Bartók's death under somewhat generous circumstances in New York in September 1945, that he was rapidly becoming established as one of the most influential composers of our century, the Hungarian powers-that-were realised that Eastern Europe would be left out on a cultural limb if they kept making a social content or political heretic out of one of their potentially greatest assets in music since Liszt. (A similar situation had arisen in post-Stalin Russia with respect to Shostakovich, re-writing history involves contractions even in music.) And so Budapest got onto the Bartók band-wagon — and this year they have converted it into a triumphal chariot.

Sydney treated Bartók handsomely, not only on the level of front-mark professional music-making and what might be called prestige concerts, but in the market arena and around the musical fringes. For instance, the Opéra House commemorated Bartók memorabilia, and held a function to honour the publication of a handbook for teachers and students called *Bartók — A Selection Of The Piano Music* commissioned by the Music Teacher's Association of NSW from Nancy Sains, the keyboard expert and educator whose enthusiasm has long been a pillar of the Bartók Society of Australia.

Sydney: Three arrivals. Polish born American conductor

Among the performers, worth noting in this Barokk year have been those of the string quartets played by the Barokk Quartet, featuring for Misa Misa, the violin and piano music from Christopher Rombert and David Müller, the Flute Concerto No. 2 from Giuseppe Ricci with the NSO under Harold Fieberman, the Flute Concerto from Wendell Dunsen with the Contemporary Symphony Orchestra under Ronald Sarna, the Piano Concerto No. 2 from Ender Heggelund with the NSO under Myer Friedman, the String music from the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Sonatas for Two Flutes and Two Percussionists with Scorpyn Hunko, David Müller, Michael Anolik and Richard Müller, and a lot of small-city music including all the 14th century of 1944 of events.

Which brings us to the final substantial act of Barick's homage — the concert performance of his one-act opera *Dieu Als Dieu s'envole* — included by the ABC's very well-patterned Saturday-morning series in the Opera House Concert Hall. *Dieu* itself is excellent source material for vampires, apocryphs and psycho-analysis; it contains enough musical papers to stimulate the imagination, and enough a logistical allusion to keep us occupied. The plot is minimal, and there are only two singers, so that concert versions are more frequent than staged ones. I have seen one of the latter and heard both of the former. The best of all three, crossed my path in the Bowery of Burn, where Charles Dutoit conducted the local orchestra and two leading Hungarian singers, born-Baroque György Molnár (who has married Australian) and mezzo-soprano Olga Szegedy.

For the *Swedish* performance, Georg Tintner – the white-suited pianist, earnestly working on Queensland – was in charge and it took him some time to develop sufficient thrust from the music, which up to about Dances Four settles. Tables upended. But then, with the materialisation of an extra bass chair and the organ from on high, numbers upended, though not without intermittent collapse. This is music with all most genres in the field of no performer and that it has had time to do here. And while the use of an English translation certainly spread intelligibility, it also drew attention to the repetitive antipathy of rhythmic motifs based on eight-measure phrases, in quite unorchestrated, one thought of a similar effect (with a different off-beat) in Father-Childhood's *Adagio*. But overall both singers, as impressive, though less fired towards the end, Donald Munro projected a somewhat demand while Margaret Floss, beautiful spine and of the music throughout. Yet after all this gloom and doom, this engendering (re)birth for Barak as composer-of-the-year in 1982 it could be Kodaly or Grieger or Stravinsky or Manuel Ponce or Field or Paganini, all born in 1782 or 1802) one couldn't help feeling a touch of sinking admiration for Jacques Offenbach, whom the Blochhaus wife of Blackboard missed to mention of influence.

Several other concerns this month raised more than 100,000 signatures.

Take Teoza Barrie, an apostle of in-person programming. Her piano recitals have opened doors towards soloists not often frequented by other pianists. In 1968 she gave four recitals in the guise of a *Concerto* of keyboard music, young student-and-hall admirers, 55 composers (quite a few of whom had died before her grand piano was selected) and 14 countries. Then in 1978, the 150th anniversary year of Schubert's birth, she devoted her recitals to 450 Schubert works, apparently including every note Gerd probably a few, even once magnanimously but erroneously attributed to him that the great sonnetist had rightly pointed. This may suggest a single recital of works by famous composers in the throes of teenage — Chopin and Schumann at 13, Beethoven at 18, Liszt at 18, Mendelssohn at 17 and so on. This sort of programming could fall short as an inadequate performer but Teoza Barrie is more than adequate and

indeed has an intense, instinctual approach which stems from worshipful and pervasive passion. No wonder she attracted the full Crown House Boarding Hall.

Then there was Anthony Fogg, a pianist of a very different musical persuasion, given to vigorous, well-studied readings of contemporary music. He used more fingers in a hand for the ABC and International Society For Contemporary Music than there were letters in their name, and his selection of works by composers like the Australians Keith Humble and Barry Conyngham, American Barbara Kufli, Peter Schat from Holland and Michael Tippett from England (I did a stimulating hour with sounds that sometimes demanded cool analysis (Humble) and at others, thank you, emotions in the soul) of their metaphysical, or sad music (Tippett).

If melody, reduction was what we missed, there was no better supply of it than from Schubert. (It's also possible the longest chamber-music work in the regular repertoire, Beethoven's played by the University of North Ensemble at one time) 1981 series concert. Also in this program was the 1846-piano version of Brahms' new, Anonymous Dances (1944) played with a great outpouring of romanticism; also by David Bullard and David Starobin.

This was more by temporal definition than actual cause of the twentieth century. Which brings us to its final point. Not the least remarkable aspect of the ABC thirties-era series *When Dr. Jekyll Meets Mr. Hyde*—which begins under direction of Vladimir Mayakovsky in the Town Hall towards the end of October—was the fact that all nine composers on the program are dead. The message seems to be that even in our own century, the only good composer is one dead one. It has been pointed out that we have only another 99 years to catch up gaps with the twentieth century before we have to start dealing with the twenty first. But there were a lot of empty seats, and their absent business missed a first-rate opening concert in the series, notable for a vocal and largely accurate reading of the symphony by Dr. Shostakovich, the superb beautiful An. Zina and Peter Gladys Wilburn and the glorious, impassioned debut here by a Polish composer who died in 1947 and is now coming back into fashion: Karol Szymanowski. More about the series next month.



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BOOKS

Passionate plea for passionless

Art

by John McCallum

On the Art of the Theatre, by Edward Gordon Craig, Heinemann, (pp \$11.20)

Edward Gordon Craig, the terrible prophetic child of 20th century theatre, is an object of some scorn to those who have never read him or have read him furiously and un sympathetically. His views on theatre management were autocratic and abhor. His high-minded devotion to an ideal of pantheistic pure Art was infuriating to those who were happy to go for big houses. Most notorious was his vision of an ideal future in which the theatre could find new materials of its own and so do away with the need for the Actor.

I believe at the time when we shall be able to create works of art in the Theatre without the use of the written play, without the use of actors, but I believe also in the necessity of daily work under the conditions which are today offered us.

The qualification is important. Craig may have been a prophet of disaster, but he also worked in the theatre himself. Nevertheless his ideal for the future contains a challenge which is worth considering. He argued that to use a human being as a material was akin to the very spirit of mankind, which was to strive for freedom and independence of expression. "Today we have the strange person of a man content to give forth the thoughts of another." Similarly the words of a script were a poor substitute for the Voice which the future Theatre Artists would use to create his works.

Craig's constant aim was to find a pure new Theatrical Art which would do away with the lower-level complexities of the theatre as it was and is. The aim is expressed partly in his contempt for naturalism and realism.

It is not a poor art and a poor cleverness, which cannot convey the spirit and essence of an idea to an audience, but can only show an artist's copy, a facsimile of the thing itself. Realism is caricature.

The new Theatre Artist, for Craig, would take his place alongside the Poet, the Painter and the Musician as a Creative Individual. Master Craftsman of his material, untroubled by the "stupid realistic details" which govern the present theatre, constantly searching for the perfect images which would express his ideas



through the new materials of pure Action, Scene and Voice. The actual physical manifestation of Action, Scene and Voice Craig had not yet fully discovered when he wrote *On the Art of the Theatre*, but it is substantiated in his idea of the Uber-Masochette — a pan-human figure able to embody the Artist's design more completely and beautifully than an actual human body.

There are many people, of course, who find the essentialism, idealism, complexity and sheer chaos of the theatre one of its most exhilarating and exciting

qualities. Craig's challenge, however, stands to be answered and no-one who takes theatre seriously should ignore this beautifully written, passionate plea for pure passionate Art.

It seems that in the absence of his manuscript since (except for a few unsatisfactory recordings) we are to be condemned to an endless series of revelations about the private, social or political life of Dame Nellie Melba. The latest is in fact by herself — a review of an autobiography she wrote in 1925 for *Liberty magazine*, *Melba's own Melba* (Melba, pp \$16.95). Melba seems to have taken the opportunity to settle a few old scores and change a few unfortunate details, but John Gargan's excellent clear-headed introduction and notes help put things back in perspective. As he says, she was not a particularly pleasant person. The book is most interesting as an evocation of a thankfully lost world of art dominated by high society.

Colin Chambers' *Other Spaces* is a brief history and analysis of the work of the Royal Shakespeare Company's "troupe," situated in the Other Space in Stratford, and the Warehouse in London. In particular it is a tribute to the work of Baz Luhrmann, the radical woman director who managed to bridge the gap between the political and social ferment of the 60s and one of the world's most respected traditional (if also experimental) theatre companies. Goodbody is principally remembered in this country for his suicide just before the opening of her acclaimed "Village Hall" Festival. This book reveals more important reasons for remembering her.

The only book in this motley December collection which has obvious Christmas gift appeal is *The Royal Ballet: The First 50 years* by Alexander Bland (Dart Bookcase Aust, pp \$39.75). This is a semi-fictional history of this great company, and a richly illustrated and handsomely produced book.

Finally three books worth mentioning are *Changing Styles in Shakespeare* by Ralph Berry (Allen & Unwin, pp \$23.95) an account of influential modern productions of various of Shakespeare's plays, a revised edition of *Signa Mosca's Training an Actor* (Ferguson, pp \$3.95), an inside view, using the now familiar dialogue which many followers of Stanislavsky seem to use, of his classes teaching his "system", and a re-issue of another, much lesser, American "how to" book — *Henry Nelson's Play Production* (Barrie & Noble, pp \$5.99) the principle virtue of which is that it is comprehensive and very cheap.

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ACROSS

- 1 The trouble with Goldworthy? (14)
- 2 Study and search for Norman's perhaps (10)
- 3 Game played with sea-horses (5,4)
- 4 A very soft French article used for temptation (3)
- 5 Hinted that the child was not honest (7)
- 6 Walk again, though you've got an old tyre (7)
- 7 Hardened chap with two different directions (5)
- 8 Past amount speculated is too much (8)
- 9 Here, and rounded one pair up for pardon (10)
- 10 Sudden rush at Blades Bladon towards Laramie (14)
- 11 Which crowd the pigs at the top of walls (8)
- 12 Cultivation up to a number of years (7)
- 13 Wrongfoot loses point in archery (14)
- 14 Presently character with tailless rodent becomes Gauchon (10)
- 15 Acts before reader's conclusions (8)

DOWN

- 1 Wetness after all logging plants (10)
- 2 Classified again, so wrote again (7)
- 3 It is alien to ignore red ruddy (9)
- 4 Play about with what all picked? (2,1,9)
- 5 Complete measure with a delicious stone (5)
- 6 Rule for measure at primary (7)
- 7 Playful and chunky like the river? (10)
- 8 Quant old dreams whole over the water (4,4,8)
- 9 One who shows up had the actor (10)
- 10 Polymide, well, almost, for slacker (8)
- 11 Quixley former writer's noted (7)
- 12 A hachelor isolated, being in a shell (7)
- 13 Have up for a large number mentioned in prescription (10)
- 14 Name will create sensation that it won't be there (15)



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